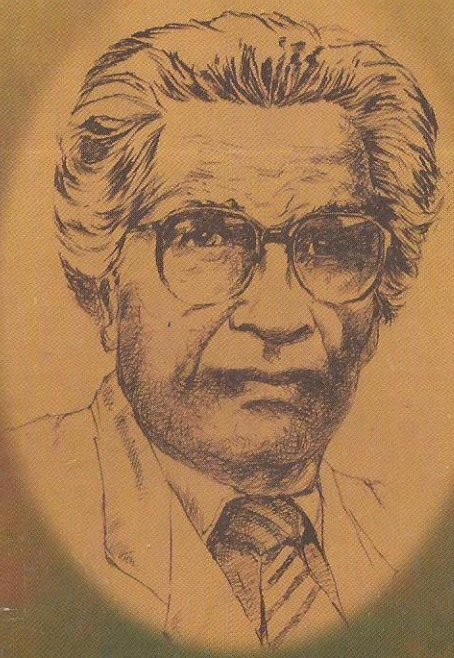

M. N. ROY

V. B. KARNIK

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

M.N. ROY

National Biography

M.N. ROY

V.B. KARNIK

NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA

ISBN 81-237-2043-2

First Edition 1980
First Reprint 1987
Second Edition 1992
Reprints 1997, 2005 (*Saka* 1926)

© V.B. Karnik

Rs 35.00

Published by the Director, National Book Trust, India
A-5 Green Park, New Delhi - 110 016

CONTENTS

	Introduction	*vii*
I.	Militant Nationalist	1
II.	In Search of Arms	13
III.	USA and Mexico	18
IV.	With the Comintern	28
V.	Communism in India	35
VI.	Mission to China	43
VII.	Differences with Comintern	51
VIII.	Back to India and Jail	59
IX.	In and Out of Congress	68
X.	War and Revolution	79
XI.	Towards Radical Humanism	85
	Notes	93
	Chronology	97
	Important Books	99
	Index	100

INTRODUCTION

M.N. Roy was a unique personality. He had to his credit active participation in the armed struggles that took place in the country in the first two decades of this century. He had also to his credit active participation in the revolutionary struggles that took place in Mexico and China in the years that followed. He had the rare distinction of having worked with world revolutionary figures like Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. None of his contemporaries in the national field had any such dazzling record. All of them, except Mahatma Gandhi, had worked only in India. None of them except Nehru had any international contacts; and even Nehru lacked the experience that Roy possessed of the revolutionary movements in other lands.

And yet when Roy began to work openly in the national movement from December 1936 onwards, he did not get the recognition and success that he deserved, nor was he able to leave on it any permanent impress of his personality. In less than four years he had to leave the Indian National Congress, the main organ of the national movement, and begin to build up a new organisation to give expression to the demands and aspirations of the large masses and fight for them. This happened after the outbreak of World War II when Roy stood boldly and firmly for an unconditional support to the war, while the Congress vacillated and ultimately ended with resistance to the war in the form of the 'Quit India' movement. The Congress policy was popular as it gave expression to the anti-British sentiment of the people. But Roy had a much clearer vision and he could see how the victory of Hitler and his allies would enslave the peoples of the world, while the victory of Great Britain and other anti-fascist powers would lead to the disintegration of empires and the liberation of India and other colonies. His prophecy came true, but he remained an unhonoured prophet!

Roy's differences with the Congress and particularly with its Gandhian leadership did not begin with World War II. They were far older, beginning with the non-co-operation movement of 1920 and the time that Roy started his arduous work of developing a communist party in India. Roy had a high regard for Gandhi as a mobiliser of the masses, but in his opinion the Gandhian programme was negative and harmless and his social outlook reactionary. With such a programme and outlook, the Gandhian leadership, he was convinced, would never be able to lead the people towards national revolution, which included political independence as well as social and economic liberation. Roy's constant effort, therefore, was, both when he was abroad and when he joined the Congress in 1936 after his release from jail, to replace that leadership by a new leadership with a clear-cut programme of an all-round political, social, economic and philosophical revolution. He placed himself in direct opposition to Gandhi. As such, he was bound to fail, which he did in spite of his vast intellectual powers, his organisational skill and his readiness to suffer and sacrifice.

Roy opposed Gandhi not as an individual, but as the representative of a school of thought and way of life which appeared to him opposed to the real interests of the people. Roy's approach was thoroughly modern, rational and scientific, while Gandhi appeared to him as an upholder of a mediaeval spiritual outlook, opponent of modern civilisation and defender of vested interests. Roy was always up in arms against popular prejudices and harmful social customs; he was opposed to the intrusion of religion into politics and social affairs; he was an ardent advocate of a philosophical revolution; he desired to change the thinking of the people in order that they may be more critical and self-reliant; he abhored hero-worship. All these did not make him popular with the people and the followers of Gandhi, and severely limited the chances of his success as a political leader. In later life when he became a Radical Humanist, some points of similarity emerged between his thinking and Gandhian thinking; but by that time Gandhiji was dead and Roy had retired from day-to-day politics.

Roy began his political life as a militant nationalist,

believing in the cult of the bomb and the pistol and the necessity of an armed insurrection. Futility of that path made him a socialist and then a communist. He rose to high positions in the communist movement. The position yielded substantial power and prestige. That would have tempted anybody to hold on to them. No such temptation deterred Roy when he found the Communist International, which directed communist movements all over the world, was set on a wrong course. He stood in opposition to the International and its leader, Stalin. He was thrown out of the organisation and all weapons of propaganda were directed against him to destroy him politically. He was branded a 'renegade', a 'counter-revolutionary', a 'lackey of imperialism' and what not. The malicious propaganda pursued him wherever he went until his death.

Roy returned to India towards the end of 1930 after an absence of over fifteen years. He was alone except for a few devoted co-workers, and ranged against him was the might of British imperialism. In a few months he was in jail paying the penalty for his efforts to develop a communist movement as part and parcel of the national movement. He jumped into the national movement as soon as he was free. But his path in the movement was not smooth; he faced opposition from the right as well as from the left. And then World War II intervened which brought about dramatic changes in national and international politics and also in the world of thought.

The happenings during the war and the post-war years revealed to Roy the inadequacies of communism and Marxism and persuaded him to transcend them. He became a Radical Humanist, completing his journey from nationalism to communism and from communism to radical humanism. It was a journey undertaken in 'quest of freedom' which appealed to him when he was a student and dragged him into the revolutionary movement. The quest took him all over the world, to China, Japan, the USA, Mexico, Russia and other countries of Europe and again to China and back to India. In the course of these wanderings he met many prominent persons and studied various schools of thought as also the modern sciences of physics and chemistry and sociology and

psychology. After studying all those, he ended with a philosophy of his own, the philosophy of radical humanism.

It is rare for a political activist to be a scholar and a thinker. Roy was both. The many books that he has left behind bear eloquent testimony to that fact. The books cover a wide variety of subjects. They range from politics and economics to philosophy and natural sciences.

The life-story of such a unique personality is bound to be fascinating. The following pages seek to throw some light on it.

I

MILITANT NATIONALIST

MANAVENDRANATH or M.N. Roy was not the original name of the person whose life is being sketched here. It was assumed years later when he desired to close one chapter of his life and open a new one. The original name was Narendranath Bhattacharya and it is by that name that he was known during the first phase of his life, the phase of militant nationalism.

Narendranath, or Naren or Noren as he was known in those days, was born in 1887 in Arbelia, a village not far from Calcutta in the district of 24 Parganas.[1] He was born in a priestly family. His father, Dinabandhu Bhattacharya, was the head-priest of the temple of Goddess Ksheputeshwari in the village Ksheput in Midnapur district of south-west Bengal. The head-priestship was hereditary in the family. Dinabandhu left the village and took a job as a Sanskrit teacher in the village of Arbelia. Narendranath was the fourth child of his father, second by his second wife whom he married after the death of his first wife. Later Dinabandhu shifted to Chingripota, a village in the same district about 12 miles south of Calcutta. He acquired some property in Chingripota where he lived till his death in May 1905.

Narendranath was brought up and educated at Chingripota which also became the scene of his first action as a militant nationalist. Little precise information is available about the school that he attended and the progress that he made there. It appears, however, that he passed the entrance examination and enlisted himself as a student in the National College in Calcutta. That was the end of his academic education.

Chingripota, the village of Narendranath, was adjacent

to the villages of Kodalia, Harnavi and Raipur. They formed together a group which has played a big role in the social and political development of modern Bengal. According to Samaren Roy : "Here were born many of the religious and social reformers of nineteenth-century Bengal, notable among them, Rajnarain Bose (maternal grandfather of Aurobindo and Barin), Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan, the famous editor of the *Som Prakasa* and associate of Pandit Sivanath Sastri. Sivanath Sastri, a great scholar of the nineteenth century, tore off his Brahmanic sacred thread, to adopt the new religion, Brahmoism. He was an uncle of Naren's mother and had perceptible influence on the younger members of the family, Rajnarain Bose and Sivanath Sastri had made the first attempt at founding a secret revolutionary society in late nineteenth century and had inspired Nabagopal Mitra's 'Jatiya Mela'.[2] Here Narendranath came in contact with Hari Kumar Chakravarty who became his life-long friend and close associate in all his social and political activities throughout his life.

In his early years, Narendranath must have absorbed a good deal of Sanskrit learning from his father, elder brother and others. He must have read a number of Sanskrit treatises on philosophy and logic. He used to quote from them occasionally in his later life. He used to trace his ancestry to Raghunandan, the famous logician of mediaeval Bengal.

During the years that Narendranath was growing up, Bengal was passing through a ferment. The ferment reached its acme during the days of the agitation against the partition of Bengal which took place in 1905, but the rumblings had begun to be heard much earlier. As a matter of fact, the partition could be said to be the British Government's clumsy answer to the ferment. It had hoped to contain the ferment by partitioning the troublesome province. But the result was exactly the opposite. The ferment became more widespread and intense and in the end the partition had to be annulled. The desire for freedom which had been awakened could not be suppressed; it grew and inspired young men to strike one blow after another against the established authority.

The ferment was countrywide. It began in the closing years of the nineteenth century and was born out of

disillusionment with the paltry outcome of the politics of representations and petitions and constitutional agitation, the growing poverty of the masses and the unemployment of educated youths and the revival of faith in the nation and its religion. The last factor which took the form of religious nationalism was the major force which in those days inspired a large number of brave young men to engage themselves in revolutionary activities for the liberation of the motherland. The idea of motherland evoked by Bankimchandra Chatterji in his famous novel *Anand Math* gripped the imagination of those young men and 'Vande Mataram' became their war cry. They wanted to be the *sanyasins* (ascetics) of the novel dedicated to the task of the liberation of the mother. Another important factor which influenced their thought and action was Swami Vivekananda who after his triumphant return from the United States of America became the powerful spokesman of religious nationalism in the form of resurrected spiritual Hinduism.

Influenced by this climate of militant nationalism prevailing in the province and in his and surrounding villages, young Narendranath was easily drawn into the revolutionary movement. It is difficult to say when he actually joined it, but it must be some time in 1904. One of his close associates of those days, Jadugopal Mukherjee, writes as follows in his foreword to Samaren Roy's *The Restless Brahmin*: "I first met Naren Bhattacharya in the Anushilan Samity about 1905 or 1906. Anushilan Samity's office at 49, Cornwallis Street had lodging arrangements for its workers, and Naren often stayed there. He and Hari Kumar Chakravarty became members of the Samity together."[3] According to Hari Kumar Chakravarty, it was in 1904 that the three friends (Narendranath, Hari Kumar and Saileswar) went to Calcutta, met Barin Ghosh, brother of Aurobindo Ghosh, and later editor of the *Yugantar* and decided to join the revolutionary movement. It was after a year or so that they must have met Jadugopal Mukherjee.

Of the earlier period, Hari Kumar Chakravarty, who had met Narendranath for the first time in 1899 and since then continued to be his close colleague and lifelong friend, wrote: "Young Naren was adventure-loving, that he loved to walk

long distances and wander about from orchard to orchard, for something distant, something beyond, all the time and that he spent lots of nights in the cremation ground looking for ghosts."[4] Narendranath was at that time a restless soul. He was studying Sanskrit with his father, he was visiting the Ramakrishna Ashram at Belur, he was learning from Sivnarain Swamy *lathi*-play and yoga and nationalism and reformed Hinduism and he was also collecting information about revolutionaries and their activities.

Narendranath's entry into the movement is described as follows by one of his colleagues of those days: "Narendra, almost a boy, hardly fourteen, and yet virile and energetic, full of revolutionary enthusiasm, rushed into a little room in which we were holding an informal talk on the problems then facing us in Bengal and elsewhere. He had a talk with us. After this, he offered himself as a whole-timer for the cause of liberty of India from the foreign yoke. He declared on oath that he would be prepared to do the impossible, for there was nothing impossible for a revolutionary. Soon after, he joined us; he proved to be of very great value to our movement and possessed rare qualities found only in a great leader of men."[5]

It is the goal of freedom which drew Naren to the revolutionary movement. In 1905, Naren used to attend anti-partition meetings held frequently in Calcutta along with his two friends, Hari Kumar Chakravarty and Saileswar Bose. Once the three friends invited the celebrated nationalist leader, Surendranath Banerjea, to Kodalia and arranged a meeting for him. For that political activity, they and a couple of others were rusticated from the school; later the order was withdrawn and they were allowed to appear for the entrance examination. Naren and his friends were avid readers of the *Bhagvad Gita*, the *Anand Math* of Bankim Chatterji, the *Bhavani Mandir* of Aurobindo Ghosh and of other revolutionary literature of the period. But what impressed them most were the books of Swami Vivekananda.

Naren and his friends then joined the Anushilan Samity, an organisation established in Calcutta in 1902 for physical, mental and moral regeneration of Bengali youths. In a short while, it developed an inner or underground wing which

became the centre of revolutionary activities all over Bengal. In course of time, similar organisations were set up in many other towns, some as branches and others as independent centres. The most prominent amongst the latter was the Anushilan Samity of Dacca. The Samitys were not always able to agree with one another about tactics; there were also personal quarrels and jealousies and suspicions about each other, though on a few occasions they came together and organised common activities. Each Samity was under one leader. Rigorous rules of admission were enforced, strict discipline was maintained and effective steps were taken to preserve the secrecy of operations. The government and police were all along suspicious about the Samitys. But they could not take action against them as their ostensible activities were lawful and because of the association with them of a number of prominent public men like C.R. Das and others. By 1908, however, they had enough evidence in their possession to connect the Samitys with political dacoities and murders, as a result of a number of raids and searches that were carried out, and they moved against them by declaring them unlawful organisations. The Calcutta Anushilan Samity was declared illegal in 1908. The turn of the Dacca Samity came the following year. Along with them a number of other Samitys were also declared illegal.

As a matter of discipline and as a matter of policy, new members of Samitys were first required to do social and relief work. Naren and Hari Kumar were sent to Orissa for famine relief work. Naren was put in charge of the Ruriahat camp at Jeypore. Their work was satisfactory and they were admitted into the inner circle after their return to Calcutta. By this time Naren had left his home and was staying in Calcutta at the headquarters of the Anushilan Samity at 49, Cornwallis Street. About this time, he came in closer contact with Barin Ghosh who had already started the Bengali daily, the *Jugantar*. Naren helped Barin Ghosh in looking after the daily and is reported to have written some articles for the newspaper. Later on he wrote a booklet in Bengali entitled *Mayer Dak* (Mother's Call). It fell into the hands of the police after which he was arrested.

Soon after joining the revolutionary movement, Naren

was initiated into the art of shooting and bomb-making. Bullets and bombs were the main instruments of the revolutionaries. They were to be used for terrorising British officers, for punishing defectors from the ranks and Indian collaborators, for awakening and enthusing the people and for armed insurrection and the freedom of the motherland.

About this time Naren came in contact with Jatindranath Mukherjee. He was a government employee working as a shorthand clerk in the office of the Financial Secretary to the Government of Bengal. But he was deeply involved in the revolutionary movement. He was affectionate by nature and had a very attractive personality. He gathered around him a large group of young revolutionaries. Naren accepted him as his leader and in later years the two worked together in a number of revolutionary ventures.

Naren was already involved with Barin Ghosh in his bomb-making activity. The centre of the activity was at Muraripukur Garden in Maniktola, a Calcutta suburb. The bombs manufactured at the centre were used in a number of places in Calcutta. The one used at Muzafferpore by Khudiram Bose on 30 April 1908 was traced to the centre. The centres was raided and searched and on the basis of the materials that were found, a conspiracy case was instituted. It was the Alipore Conspiracy Case in which Barin Ghosh and Aurobindo Ghosh were the principal accused. Naren was not involved in the case, though the police had suspicions about him.

About a year earlier, Naren committed the first political dacoity in the province. It was committed in order to secure funds for the revolutionary activities that had developed under the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee. The dacoity was committed at the Chingripota Railway Station on 6 December 1907.

The station-master was assaulted and money in the safe of his office was taken away. Naren absconded after the dacoity but was arrested a few days later. When he was arrested, a copy of Barin Ghosh's *Bartaman Rananiti* (Strategy of Modern Warfare) and the manuscript titled *Mayer Dak* (Mother's Call) were found in his possession. Naren was released on bail, his reputation as a social worker in the area having helped him. In the application for bail before the police

magistrate of Sealdah in Calcutta, the lawyer, Babu Promotho Nath Mukherjee, stated, "The youth was a student of the Bengal Technical Institute and passed the entrance examination (school leaving examination) of the National College and got a medal." In the couple of years that followed, Naren committed several political dacoities but little definite information is available about them. One about which a little information is available is the dacoity at Netra, near Diamond Harbour in the district of 24 Parganas. It was committed on 25 April 1909. While leaving after collecting about Rs 2,000, Naren is reported to have told the owner of the house : "We are only borrowing the money to drive the British away." Naren was arrested in connection with the dacoity. He was released on bail and then he absconded. The Netra dacoity was not tried separately. It was made part of the Howrah Conspiracy Case which was instituted a year later.

Living as a fugitive, Naren spent most of his time in Howrah and Sibpur. The Anushilan Samity had been banned by this time; Aurobindo Ghosh had retired from politics; Barin Ghosh and others had been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. The revolutionary movement was therefore in deep disarray. It fell to the lot of Naren to get together the scattered elements, revive their confidence and reorganise their ranks. He did this under the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee. He was the organiser who moved from place to place and met active workers; Jatin Mukherjee provided the inspiration and the rallying point. Naren's Chingripota group played a big part in this work. While in Howrah, Naren carried on political discussions with various groups and was planning guerilla type warfare and other means to drive the British out of the country.

According to information collected by Samaren Roy through interviews with his colleagues of those days, Naren's political thinking was much ahead of others: he held socialistic views and never mixed religion with politics. Naren used to talk about what kind of government he wanted in place of the British Government. He thought of a 'People's Government' as distinct from the government of the privileged few, and that the only way to establish such a government was revolution.

The Howrah-Sibpur Conspiracy Case was instituted early in 1910. Most of the accused—there were in all 46 accused in the case including Naren and Jatin Mukherjee—were arrested on 29 January. The magisterial inquiry commenced on 4 March. The magistrate committed them for trial before a Special Tribunal of the High Court on 20 July. The charge against the accused was that they "between the Christian years of 1905 and 1910, both inclusive at Sibpur, in the district of Howrah and at other places in British India, did conspire with one another and with other persons... to wage war against His Majesty the King-Emperor and deprive the King-Emperor of the sovereignty of British India and to overawe by means of criminal force the Government of India by law established and thereby committed an offence punishable under Section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code."[6] The prosecution sought to connect the conspiracy with "a large number of crimes of a political nature which included murder of two police officers and of an informer, collection of arms and ammunitions, and attempt to tamper with the loyalty of the 10th Jat Regiment and a large number of dacoities carried out by *Bhadralogs* with the object of securing funds for the conspiracy."

Thirty-three persons, who were acquitted, had to spend over a year in jail. Naren was one of them. He had to spend about nine months in jail in solitary confinement, the most excruciating experience for him. Apart from the Chingripota dacoity, Naren was charged with involvement in six dacoities each in 1908 and 1909. The Chief Justice did not think that the evidence produced proved Naren's involvement.

It was in the jail, while undergoing the trial, that Jatin Mukherjee, Naren and others drew up a plan of their future work. It was a plan of armed insurrection.

The first thing that had to be done was to place the programme of armed insurrection before all revolutionary groups and persuade them to accept it. The next was to establish unity among them and bring them under one leadership. Naren undertook the two tasks and accomplished them in a very successful manner. For this purpose he had to move all over Bengal and also visit many other parts of the country. For some time he became a *sanyasi*. As a *sanyasi* it was

easier to move about without arousing the suspicion of the police. Some revolutionary leaders had become *sanyasis* and some of Naren's colleagues thought that he was following in their footsteps. His constant search for holy men might have strengthened their suspicion. But it soon became clear that the liberation that Naren was seeking was not the liberation of the soul but of his motherland. During those days Naren visited places like Banaras, Allahabad, Agra and Mathura. The intimate knowledge of the country that he gained through these wanderings and the contacts that he made proved very useful for later activities. In about a year or so a united organisation was established with branches and contacts in Bengal and outside. It came to be known as the Jugantar Party.

After his release from jail, Naren took up employment also as a cover—as agent of the 'India Equitable Assurance Company'. He also worked as a bill collector of a rice mill and a timber works in Beliaghata. In 1912-13, Naren mainly stayed at a boarding house in Sreegopal Mullick Lane. Sometime later, Naren gave up his jobs and opened a restaurant which became a centre for procurement of arms and exchange of information. It was popular amongst soldiers and sailors owing to the special dishes that Naren used to cook for them.

The activities of the revolutionary groups were no longer confined to Bengal. They spread to northern parts such as the Punjab, Delhi and UP and contacts were established in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Madras also. Young men trained in Bengal were sent for 'actions' in those parts and sometimes the bombs and pistols used also came from Bengal. The most prominent case of this type was the bomb thrown at the Vicerory of India, Lord Hardinge, on 23 December 1912, on the occasion of his State entry into Delhi.

Contacts were established with Indian revolutionary groups in Europe, the United States of America, Burma, Indonesia and in places like Bangkok, Singapore, and Hongkong. In the Western Hemisphere, there were strong revolutionary groups in Vancouver in Canada and in San Francisco in the United States.

Preparations for armed insurrection required funds.

The task of raising them was entrusted to Naren. "The job of finding money for initial expenditure, entrusted to me, was soon done according to plan,"[8] stated M.N. Roy later in his *Memoirs*. Funds were raised through a number of political dacoities committed under Naren's supervision. One of them deserves special mention. On 12 February 1915, Naren with two others looted the cash of Bird and Company in broad daylight in Garden Reach at Calcutta, in the first dacoity of the series. This dacoity, which has come to be known as the Garden Reach Political Dacoity, created a sensation in Calcutta. This was the first major dacoity and the whole operation was completed within a few minutes at gun-point without having to fire a shot. According to Dr Jadugopal Mukherjee, "The Garden Reach dacoity was an act of supreme courage and daring, and it was executed by the cool-headed brain of Naren Bhattacharya in a perfect manner. Not a shot was fired."[9] Naren was arrested a day or two later for his part in the dacoity.

Another revolutionary 'action' which took place a few months earlier also deserves notice. The report of the Sedition Committee describes it as follows : "The theft of pistols from Rodda & Co., a firm of gunmakers in Calcutta, was an event of the greatest importance in the development of revolutionary crime in Bengal. On Wednesday, the 26th of August 1914, the clerk of Rodda & Co., whose duty it was to clear imports of arms and ammunition, at the Customs Office had cleared 22 cases of arms and ammunition but had brought only 192 cases to his employer's warehouse in Vansittart Row. He had then left, saying that he was going to bring the remainder. He never returned and after three days the case was reported to the police. The 10 missing cases contained 50 Mauser pistols and 46,000 rounds of Mauser ammunition for the same, the pistols were of large size 300 bore, and each pistol bore a number of which Rodda & Co. had a record. The pistols were so constructed and packed that by attaching to the butt the box containing the pistols, a weapon was produced which could be fired from the shoulder in the same way as a rifle. The authorities have reliable information to show that 44 of these pistols were almost at once distributed to 9 different revolutionary groups

in Bengal, and it is certain that the pistols so distributed were used in 54 cases of dacoity or murder or attempts at dacoity and murder subsequent to August 1914. It may indeed safely be said that few, if any, revolutionary outrages have taken place in Bengal since August 1914, in which Mauser pistols stolen from Rodda & Co. have not been used."[10] Naren took a prominent part in the execution of this action'.

About this time the international situation had become tense. Clouds of war had gathered on the horizon and there was a likelihood of a war breaking out between England and Germany. Revolutionaries had already received intimation from their friends abroad that in the event of a war, Germany would be willing to help them.

In India revolutionaries sought out German authorities and opened talks with them. Towards the end of 1913, Naren began efforts to make contact with the Germans through the German Consulate-General in Calcutta. He and Jatin Mukherjee held several meetings with the German Consul-General in Calcutta by the beginning of 1914, to discuss plans for armed insurrection and guerilla warfare as soon as the war would break out.

The war between England and Germany began in August 1914. The revolutionaries then redoubled their efforts to take advantage of the situation. It was decided to organise an armed insurrection and Jatin Mukherjee was elected the supreme leader of the united party. Jatin Mukherjee was in those days staying outside Calcutta and working as a contractor. He was, however, visiting Calcutta from time to time. Later it became unsafe for him to go to Calcutta. Naren then arranged a safe place for him to stay in the village Mohandia, not far from Balasore, and a commercial establishment called Universal Emporium was set up to provide a channel of communication. There were already two such establishments in Calcutta.

Preparations for the insurrection were going on in Calcutta. Naren had won over the sceptics by assuring them that steps would be taken to paralyse communications. Accordingly, centres were opened at Chakradharpur and Sambalpur to paralyse the transport and communication systems when necessary. A few days later a meeting was held

in Banaras to discuss the plan of the insurrection. The meeting was attended by Rashbehary Bose, Jatin Mukherjee, Naren, Amrendranath Chattopadhyaya and Atulkrishna Ghosh. It was in March 1915 that the revolutionaries received intimation that Germany was willing to send arms. Along with the intimation came the suggestion to send a representative to Batavia to discuss details. The revolutionaries were elated by the prospect of getting arms. They accepted the invitation to send a representative. The choice fell upon Naren and that proved to be a turning-point in his political career.

II

IN SEARCH OF ARMS

NAREN left India for Java in April 1915 in search of arms. He did not get the arms that he was looking for. He got instead a new identity and a new ideology. That happened at the end of his quest for arms.

Naren left as 'C. Martin'. He was ostensibly an agent of the Calcutta firm, Harry & Sons. The firm was established by the revolutionaries as a cover for their activities. It was in charge of Naren's close friend, Harikumar Chakravarty. Naren's contact with the revolutionaries in India during his travels in search of arms was maintained through the firm.

Writing about his mission, M.N. Roy stated later in his *Memoirs* : "On the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Indian revolutionaries in exile looked towards Germany as the land of hope, and rushed there full of great expectations. By the end of year, the news reached us in India that the Indian Revolutionary Committee in Berlin had obtained from the German Government the promise of arms and money required to declare the war of independence. The news, spread like wild fire, to affect the Indian soldiers of the British army also." Continuing he stated : "Then we were confronted with the problem of getting the promised arms into the country. Our transporting them all the way from Germany was out of the question. A messenger went to Berlin with the proposal that the Germans should deliver the arms to us in a neutral country nearest to India. We chose the Dutch East Indies, and before the end of 1914, I left for Java—my first trip out of the country."

What happened in Batavia after Naren reached the place is related as follows by the Sedition Committee in its report : "On his arrival at Batavia, 'Martin' was introduced by

the German Consul to Theodor Helfferich, who stated that a cargo of arms and ammunition was on its way to Karachi to assist the Indians in a revolution. 'Martin' then urged that the ship should be diverted to Bengal.

"This was eventually agreed to after reference to the German Consul-General in Shanghai. 'Martin' then returned to make arrangements to receive the cargo of the *Maverick*, as the ship was called, at Rai Mangal in the Sundarbans. The cargo was said to consist of 30,000 rifles with 400 rounds of ammunition each and 2 lakhs of rupees. Meanwhile 'Martin' had telegraphed to Harry & Sons in Calcutta, a bogus firm kept by a well-known revolutionary, that 'business was helpful'. In June, Harry & Sons wired to 'Martin' for money, and then began a series of remittances from Helfferich in Batavia to Harry & Sons in Calcutta between June and August, which aggregated Rs 43,000, of which the revolutionaries received Rs 33,000 before the authorities discovered what was going on."[2]

Naren returned to India in the middle of June. The plans that were made to receive the *Maverick's* cargo and put it to best use can be related best in the words of the report of the Sedition Committee. It states: "They decided to divide the arms into three parts, to be sent, respectively to:

1. Hatia, for the eastern Bengal district to be worked by the members of the Barisal Party.
2. Calcutta.
3. Balasore.

"They considered that they were numerically strong enough to deal with the troops in Bengal, but they feared reinforcements from outside. With this idea in view, they decided to hold up the three main railways into Bengal by blowing up the principal bridges. Jatindra was to deal with the Madras Railway from Balasore. Bholanath Chatterji was sent to Chakradharpur to take charge of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway, while Satish Chakrabarti was to go to Ajay and blow up the bridge on the East Indian Railway, Naren Chaudhari and Phanindra Chakrabarti were told to go to Hatia, where a force was to collect, first to obtain control of the eastern Bengal districts, and then to march on to Calcutta. The Calcutta party, under Naren Bhattacharji and Bepin

Ganguli, were first to take possession of all the arms and arsenals, around Calcutta, then to take Fort William, and afterwards to sack the town of Calcutta. The German officers arriving in the *Maverick* were to stay in eastern Bengal and raise and train armies."[3]

When in spite of many messages sent through a variety of channels there was no response, it was decided to send Naren again to Batavia to make fresh arrangements. It was decided to send him in order to discuss fresh plans with the Germans which included arrangement for overland transport of arms. Roy describes it as follows in his *Memoirs* : "The attempt to smuggle arms in ships having failed, I went abroad for the second time with the alternative plan of bringing arms overland from China. They were to be smuggled through the north-eastern frontiers, where the Abors had risen in revolt only recently. While I left to get arms abroad, a group of our comrades, led by the cleverest amongst us, was to proceed to the north-eastern frontiers, to incite the Abors and the neighbouring tribes to rise again in revolt; this time to be helped with arms and other resources from outside."[4]

After Naren's departure, a disaster befell his party resulting in the heroic death of his leader, Jatindranath Mukherjee. His fight against the police is enshrined in the annals of the revolutionary movement of Bengal as the Battle of Balasore. The battle resulting in the death of the commander-in-chief broke the back of the movement. It was several years before it recovered from that blow and resumed its work.

In the meanwhile, Naren was busy in his search for arms. On this occasion the Germans were less co-operative. The German Consul complained that the Indians lacked organisation and that they were not able to keep secrets. Naren had three or four meetings with the Consul but found that he was making no progress. "The Germans had no men to send and were unwilling to risk a ship."

Another attempt that was made is described as follows in the *Memoirs* : "I made yet another attempt to bring help overseas from Indonesia. The plan was to use the German ships interned in a port at the northern tip of Sumatra, to storm the Andaman Islands and free and arm the prisoners

there, and land the army of liberation on the Orissa coast. The ships were armoured, as many big German vessels were, ready for war-time use. They also carried several guns each. The crew was composed of naval ratings. They had to escape from the internment camp, seize the ships and sail. The skeleton crew left on board each ship could have the steam up. Several hundred rifles and other small arms with an adequate quantity of ammunition could be acquired through Chinese smugglers who would get them on board the ships. The plan failed because the Germans would not play such a serious game. At the last moment, the money for the purchase of arms was not forthcoming, and the German Consul-General mysteriously disappeared on the day when he was to issue orders for the execution of the plan."

One more effort than Naren made was of a more ambitious character. It brought him in contact with Sun Yat-sen and other leaders of the Chinese revolution and also made him travel all over China. Engaged in that effort, Naren found himself in British custody for one night in the Chinese city of Tientsin. The sense of justice of the British Consul-General and his own resourcefulness rescued him out of that predicament. Towards the end of 1915, there was a revolt in two Chinese provinces of Yunan and Szechuan, bordering on Burma and India. The revolt was against Yuan Shi-kai's plan to restore monarchy. The rebels had plenty of arms. Naren's suggestion was that the Chinese rebels should pass on some of those arms to Indian revolutionaries across the border. Sun Yat-sen liked the idea and asked Naren to get five million dollars from the German Ambassador for the purchase of those arms. If the money were available, Sun Yat-sen would send his emissary to Yunan and then Naren was to proceed there to take over the 'precious cargo'. Years later, Roy wrote in his *Memoirs*: "The grandiose plan made a strong appeal to my spirit of adventure. At last perhaps in a few months, the dream of appearing on the frontiers of India with arms enough to raise an army might be fulfilled."[6]

The plan fell through because at the last moment the Germans were not ready to spend the large amount which it required. That angered and embittered Naren. In his *Memoirs*, Roy wrote later that the Germans "had never meant to

give us any considerable help", and that the whole German plan of giving arms to Indian revolutionaries "was a hoax, a veritable swindle". Naren's active search for arms ended at this stage though he continued to look out for them for several months even after he reached the New World.

The German Ambassador sent Naren on to the New World on his way to Berlin. The large sum of five million dollars which Naren demanded for the purchase of Chinese arms could be sanctioned, the Ambassador said, only by higher authorities. He therefore advised Naren to proceed to Berlin and place his plan before 'the Supreme War Lord and his General Staff'. Admiral von Hintze was then the German Ambassador in China. He asked Naren to go to Berlin because "he felt that from the military point of view, my plan was worth trying and therefore the High Command might finance it."[7] He arranged for the journey and gave Naren a passport made out in the name of Father Martin, a native of Pondicherry going to Paris to study theology.

Naren had by this time heard the sad news of the death in battle of his leader and commander-in-chief, Jatin Mukherjee, and of the arrest and long-term imprisonment and of going into hiding of a number of his colleagues in the revolutionary movement. That movement had disintegrated in the intervening months, and Naren felt no urge to go back to India.

III

USA AND MEXICO

NAREN, who was soon to become M.N. Roy, landed in San Francisco on the west coast of the United States of America in June 1916. His arrival was not unnoticed. A local paper reported: "When the *Nippon Maru* touched port today from Hong Kong, it carried a man of mystery. He is Chas A. Martin, who despite his name is Hindu and high-caste Brahmin. Martin declared that he boarded the boat at a French-Indian port and that he is *en route* to Paris to study. Passengers, however, declared that he did not board the ship at such a point and believe him to be either a revolutionary leader or an emissary of the British Government."[1]

This publicity was not welcome to Naren, as his experience had shown him the futility of the activities that he had carried on so long and as he desired to turn in a different direction which he did in the course of his stay in the USA and Mexico. An Indian friend whom he knew and with whom he stayed on the campus of Stanford University suggested a change of name to wipe out the past and to begin a new career. Naren accepted the advice and changed his name to Manavendranath. The surname Roy is, however, far different from Bhattacharya. It is not possible to know why the particular name Roy, common Bengali name, was selected.

M.N. Roy was born on the campus of Stanford University. Roy has called it 'my rebirth'. As stated by him in his *Memoirs* it enabled him to turn his back on a futile past and look forward to a new life of adventures and achievements. As described by him, "It was the beginning of an existing journey in a new world."[2] He could not, however, give up his old mission of securing arms for the revolution in India without a struggle. It continued to haunt him in the USA and

Mexico. He gave it up ultimately when he found that the Germans were not serious and when the new vision of a more broad-based revolution captured his mind.

By this time police repression had shattered the revolutionary organisation in India and, even if he had secured the arms, they could not have been utilised.

In Stanford, Roy met many academicians and political workers. He made many friendships. The most fruitful amongst them was the friendship with Evelyn Trent. She went along with him to New York and married him. She became Roy's political collaborator. She accompanied him to Mexico and Russia and was of great help to him in his political and literary work. She co-authored a couple of books with Roy and wrote from time to time for communist journals under the pen-name 'Shantidevi'. The collaboration continued until they separated in 1926.

In New York, Roy came in contact with many American socialists and other progressives. He also came in contact with the Indian nationalist leader, Lala Lajpat Rai. The two became good friends. Roy began in New York a systematic study of socialism. The study was begun with the intention of combating it. But he soon discovered that he had become a convert to socialism. In the beginning Roy did not accept the materialist philosophy of socialism. The acceptance took place later, under the guidance of Michael Borodin, one of the leaders of Russian revolution whom he met and befriended in Mexico. The transition from nationalism to socialism was a big event in Roy's political career. It was a sharp break with his past nurtured on Bankimchandra and Vivekananda and orthodox Hindu philosophy.

Roy continued to work for the revolution. But the revolution that he visualised after his conversion to socialism was basically different from the revolution that he worked for as a militant nationalist. One visualised a new social order, while the other was restricted only to the overthrow of British rule. One was to be the result of well-planned activities of large masses, while the other was to be brought about by a small band of brave revolutionaries. One was based on the operation of economic forces, while the other was indifferent to them. One demanded the acceptance of a rational materi-

alist outlook, while the other did not insist on any change in the mental and social outlook of the revolutionaries or the people. Roy did not travel the whole road to socialism in one step. The progress was gradual. The transition from socialism to communism which was accomplished the following year in Mexico was, however, quick. Communism offered in those days the most promising way to the goal of socialism.

Roy's study of socialism in New York was abruptly interrupted by his involvement in the Hindu-German Conspiracy Case instituted in San Francisco after the USA joined the war in June 1917. The case involved about a hundred Americans, Germans and Indians. The charge was "violating American neutrality laws by participating in a nationwide conspiracy, financed by the Kaiser and promulgated through the German Foreign Office, to foment rebellion in India and to aid Germany in the prosecution of the war, compelling Great Britain to divert essential troops from Europe in order to put down rebellion elsewhere."[3]

Roy was arrested one evening on the campus of the Columbia University where he had gone after attending a meeting addressed by Lajpat Rai. He had to spend a few hours of the night in jail before he was released in the early hours of the morning and asked to appear before the Grand Jury in the Town Hall a few hours later. The Grand Jury indicted him for 'violating the immigration laws of the USA' and pending trial released him on personal security. Roy left the court with the determination not to go there again. He wrote later in the *Memoirs* : "To court imprisonment had not yet become a revolutionary virtue. For good reasons, too. In the pre-Gandhian days imprisonment for a political offence was not State hospitality, it lasted for years of hardship, and put patriotism to a severe test. Naturally, revolutionaries of that period tried to keep out of jail as long as possible, although some of them would not mind to go to the gallows."[4]

To abscond was not new to Roy. He had done it several times in India. He decided to resort to it again. He had heard from his socialist friends about Mexico, about the social revolution that was taking place there and about the establishment of socialism in one part of the country, the State Yucatan. He had a letter of introduction to the Governor of

that State, General Alvarado. His mind was made up. He decided to run away to Mexico. The border was several hundred miles away but it was not very closely watched. He gave a slip to the police in New York and after a two-day train journey landed in Mexico.

Roy reached Mexico in July 1917. He was there a fugitive, having jumped bail in the USA He was also a fugitive from British justice for the various political dacoities and other offences that he had committed in India. But in those days of the war, in which Mexico was officially neutral but sympathetically inclined towards Germany, political offenders from the USA or Great Britain were not denied entry into the country. They found a safe harbour in Mexico.

Roy landed in Mexico without any money and without any friends. The only credential he had was a letter of introduction to General Alvarado, the Governor of the State of Yucatan, which was far away from Mexico city and practically inaccessible from that place. That letter enabled him to find an entry into the higher ruling circles of Mexico. Contacts with officers of the German military machine established in Java enabled him to get hold of large amounts of money. These were the two assets with which he began his life in Mexico without the least idea of the big role that he was to play with their help in the political life of the country. The role that he played was big by any standard and it was unique because it was played by an utter stranger who had arrived in the country as a political fugitive.

In less than a week after his arrival, Roy met two German officers whom he had met earlier in Indonesia. They put him in touch with their superiors. There was a talk about the plan that Roy, as Naren, had prepared for the purchase of arms in China and their transport overland to India. The plan was approved and Roy was asked to go to China to pursue it. Roy was not keen on going, but he agreed to go by 'force of habit'. Later the plan fell through as the Japanese steamer by which Roy was to go failed to arrive. He then returned to Mexico City and then began to look around for the political work that he wanted to do.

The contact with the German officers helped Roy in two ways. He found an entry into the ruling circles of Mexico

including the President and he came in possession of large funds. The funds were given to him for his work in China. He toyed with the idea for some days of returning them to the Germans when work in China became impossible. In the end he decided to keep them himself. That created a moral problem but he solved it by deciding to use them for furthering the cause of revolution. And, in fact, that is what he did. He used them for developing the Socialist Party of Mexico and later for rendering assistance to Borodin and the Russian Trade Mission in Washington. About the latter, Roy wrote in his *Memoirs* : "My relation with the Bolsheviks began by helping them financially... Since the Bolsheviks captured power, Russian gold went to all the corners of the world, far and near, to promote the communist movement. At least, once the traffic was reversed."[5] In the first few years of his career in the Communist International, there was recognition of this financial help received from Roy.

When Roy reached Mexico, General Venustiano Carranza had established his supremacy and become the President of the country. The civil war had ended but the country was still in a disturbed condition. The writ of the central government did not run in some parts. President Carranza had proclaimed a new constitution which gave some rights to the people as well as advanced the interests of workers and peasants. The government was generally popular, but it did not enjoy the support of any organised popular group. The need of such support became evident when, a few weeks after Roy's arrival, the country faced the threat of American invasion. Roy was at that time of great help to the government in mobilising the support of the people.

Roy began his political work by writing articles for a leading daily newspaper, the *El Pueblo*, which was known as the non-official mouthpiece of the government. The articles were written in English and then translated into Spanish, the language of the country. They brought him to the attention of liberal politicians and socialist workers. There were a few persons in Mexico City who called themselves socialists. But they were more anarchists and syndicalists than socialists.

They did not believe in political action nor in the defence of the country. They did not also want to have anything to do

with middle-class intellectuals. Roy had to educate them and persuade them to think in terms of a broad-based political party able to influence the course of events. In this work he received a good deal of help from a few American socialists and pacifists who had sought refuge in Mexico because they did not want to participate in an imperialist war. In a few months the situation became ripe for launching the Socialist Party. An impressive conference was held in Mexico City in December 1917 and the Socialist Party was launched. The conference elected Roy as General Secretary of the party. His work for creating the party was so outstanding that nobody paid any attention to the fact that he was a foreigner. *Al-Companero Indio* (The Indian Comrade) was held in such high esteem that everybody welcomed the election.

The party conference adopted a socialist programme and demanded from the government a number of measures for the amelioration of the large masses. It extended at the same time support to the government in resisting the threatened American invasion. This was according to the plan drawn up by Roy. He had secured an assurance from the President and others prominent in the government that a more liberal policy would be adopted and all efforts would be made to satisfy the immediate demands of workers and peasants.

As an earnest of that sympathetic attitude of the government, a leader of the Socialist Party, Plutarco Elias Callas, was appointed Labour Minister, a short while after the conference. The appointment placed an additional responsibility on Roy. He had to draft the labour bill and accompany the Labour Minister to various places to pacify workers who were resorting to strikes. Apart from this, he had also to help in the editing of the party journal and the building up of the party organisation. The activities of the Socialist Party strengthened and widened the social base of the government. With the people mobilised in support of the government, the danger of foreign invasion disappeared. The President and the government gave Roy full credit for this favourable change in the national and international situation.

While Roy was thus busy building up the Socialist Party, a mysterious visitor came to Mexico City. He was Michael

Borodin, one of the leaders of the Bolshevik Party of Russia. He was on a secret mission to the New World. Moscow had sent him with Crown jewels worth a million roubles with instructions to sell them and use the sale proceeds for the upkeep of the Trade Mission in Washington and the development of the communist movement in the Americas. Borodin had sewn the jewels in the bottom of two suitcases. On the journey he had entrusted the suitcases to an Austrian army officer who was to deliver them to his wife in Chicago. Through some mishap, the officer could not discharge his responsibility for about a year. That left Borodin stranded in New York which he had to leave soon to escape arrest. Thus, he landed in Mexico City without any money and under an assumed name. In Mexico City he learnt about the Socialist Party and its 'Hindu' General Secretary. He sought out Roy and met him. The meeting proved crucial for Roy's political life.

Knowing of the difficult situation in which Borodin found himself, Roy invited him to stay at his place. Roy relieved him also of his financial anxieties. He sent money to Borodin's wife in Chicago and to the Russian Trade Mission in Washington. That was how he used the money that he had obtained from the Germans. He also arranged for the search of the army officer and the suitcases entrusted to him. The search was not fruitful, but eventually the suitcases reached Borodin's wife. In the meanwhile, when Borodin returned to Moscow, he was charged with misappropriation of the Crown jewels. He was likely to be convicted, but Roy's testimony cleared him and saved his life. That was, Roy wrote in his *Memoirs*, his "second contribution to the cause of revolution".

Roy and Borodin became very good friends. Later they worked together in Moscow and China. In spite of differences on political issues from time to time, the friendship continued throughout Roy's association with the Comintern. Borodin completed Roy's conversion to communism. Borodin was a very learned and cultured individual and Roy was a willing pupil. Roy learned from him not only the intricacies of dialectical materialism but also the greatness of European civilisation and the appreciation of art and culture. Roy also

learnt from him the imperative need of a worldwide social revolution and the tactics and strategy of organising it.

Roy introduced Borodin to President Carranza and other important people in the government. Borodin impressed them and with Roy's efforts succeeded in securing many facilities for the work of the Russian Government and the Comintern. Thus thanks to Roy's position in Mexico, the Bolsheviks secured a foothold in the New World. Borodin accomplished the mission that was entrusted to him which, he knew, could not have been accomplished but for Roy's assistance.

The news of the Russian Revolution had travelled all over the world and electrified the atmosphere in many countries. There was a demand in the Socialist Party for declaration of its support to the Russian Revolution and of its affiliation to the Communist International established thereafter. The demand became more insistent when the news of the presence of a Bolshevik emissary in the city as the guest of the General Secretary leaked out.A suggestion was made that an extraordinary conference of the party should be held to convert it into a communist party. The conference was held a few weeks later. Roy presided over it. The conference decided to change the name of the party. It became the Communist Party, the first in the world outside Russia. It adopted the manifesto issued by the Comintern and decided to affiliate itself to it. It was also decided to send a delegation to the second congress of the Comintern which was to meet in Moscow in the middle of the following year. The names of the delegates were not mentioned. But it was understood that Roy would be one of them.

Borodin had prepared the ground for Roy's visit to Moscow. He had been sending reports about Roy's work. He was anxious that Roy should attend the second congress and meet the leaders of the Russian Revolution. The invitation opened out a new prospect for Roy. It was a prospect to work for world revolution in the company of persons who had established their credentials by bringing about a revolution in their own country. It was a fascinating prospect; and yet it was not easy for Roy to decide. Mexico had been very kind and hospitable to him. It had given him an opportunity to

engage in political work of a different type, a type he was not acquainted with in the course of his work in India. He had made many friends and he knew that they would be unhappy at his decision to go away. But there was one temptation. Borodin had invited his attention to the fact that Moscow was on the way to India and from Moscow he could proceed at an opportune time to India to resume his work for the Indian revolution. That clinched the issue, but before taking decision, Roy consulted President Carranza and others and secured their approval.

Roy left Mexico in November 1919. A diplomatic passport was arranged for him and Mexico's representatives in European countries were advised to render him any assistance that he might need. Evelyn Roy, who was with him in Mexico, accompanied him to Moscow.

In the *Memoirs*, Roy has paid a rich tribute to Mexico for its hospitality and kindness and described in telling words the change the took place in him in the course of his two and a half years' stay in that land. He wrote: "As the day of my departure drew nearer, the feeling of loss became keener. I had been in Mexico for two years and a half. But it seemed as if I had lived there since my childhood. I never made many personal friends. Mexican exuberance, heavily tinged with conventionality, though not always hypocritical, was incompatible with my temperament. Nevertheless, I could not possibly help being moved by the facts that it was an extremely hospitable country, the government friendly beyond expectation, out of proportion to the little service that I could render out of gratitude, and a large number of highly developed individuals treated me with kindness, consideration and affection. On the whole, it was a rich and gratifying experience. In a sense, Mexico was the land of my re-birth. It is true that before coming here I had begun to feel dissatisfied with ideas and ideals of my earlier life. But it was during my stay in Mexico that the new vision became clear and the dissatisfaction with a sterile past was replaced by conviction to guide me in a more promising future. It was more than a change of political ideas and revolutionary ideals. I acquired a new outlook on life; there was a revolution in my mind—a philosophical revolution which knew no finality. The fundamental

change in the outlook on life enabled me to overcome the emotional attachment to the land of my rebirth."[6] Continuing, Roy wrote: "I left the land of rebirth an intellectually free man, though with a new faith. But the philosophical solvent of the faith was inherent in itself. I no longer believed in political freedom without the content of economic liberation and social justice. But I had also realised that intellectual freedom—freedom from the bondage of all tradition and authority—was the condition for any effective struggle for social emancipation."

IV

WITH THE COMINTERN

To Roy, the journey to Moscow was like a pilgrimage. He had by that time become a convinced ardent communist and had accepted Moscow as the directing centre of the world revolution to which he had pledged his life. He was anxious to work for revolution in India, but hoped to carry on that work more effectively under the guidance and direction of the centre of world revolution located in Moscow. He was going there to enlist himself as a soldier in the army of world revolution. In those years immediately following the end of World War I and the success of the revolution in Russia, Roy was not alone in feeling attracted towards Russia and in desiring to place his service at the disposal of that holy land of revolution. Hundreds of noble souls who had devoted themselves to the cause of social revolution felt that urge and rushed to Moscow. Many were disappointed by what they saw and particularly by later developments and dropped out of the communist movement. Roy was also disappointed and parted company with the communists, but that happened much later, after about a decade.

In those days it was not easy to go to Russia or even to travel within Europe itself from one country to another. Many war-time restrictions were still in force. It was arranged that delegates to the second congress of the Comintern (Communist International) should gather in Berlin and would be then transported to Russia. Accordingly, Roy reached Berlin towards the end of December 1919.[1] Earlier he had landed in Spain and had, as instructed by Borodin, contacted the leaders of the Socialist Party and anarchist and syndicalist groups to persuade them to attend the second congress. The first congress, which founded the Comintern, held in Moscow

in April 1919, was not representative. The attendance from socialist groups in Europe was meagre. It was decided to make the second congress more representative. Roy was entrusted with the task of canvassing the support of socialist groups in Spain.

Roy had to spend over four months in Berlin before arrangements could be made to take him to Moscow. He utilised the time to study the condition in Germany and to meet and discuss problems, theoretical and practical, with leaders of the socialist and communist parties. The imperial regime of the Kaiser had been overthrown, before Roy reached Berlin. After a few months of civil war, terror and anarchy, the Social Democratic Party had placed itself in power. But its power was not unchallenged. During Roy's stay in Berlin, the army staged a *coup d'etat*. It is known in history as the Knapp Putsch which took place in March 1920. A section of the army marched into Berlin and occupied the city. The government ran away in panic. But workers saved the situation. They organised a general strike. It was a total strike which paralysed all life in the city. Unable to deal with it, the army marched out and the government was saved. Roy saw from his hotel window the army coming in as well as marching out. It was a demonstration to him of the power of the working class.

The Social Democratic Party of Germany was the best organised of the socialist parties of Europe. It had the powerful backing of a strong and well-knit trade union movement. It had in its leadership a number of experienced and mature socialist thinkers. They were all Marxists, but their interpretation of the teachings of Karl Marx was different from that of the Bolsheviks who had captured power in Russia. As Marxists, they believed in the inevitability of social revolution and cherished the ideal of the liberation of workers and the establishment of a new social order of freedom and equality. They believed in inevitable but gradual progress towards socialism and disapproved violent activities and armed insurrection. In power, they tried to steer the country in the direction of socialism. But they had to contend against powerful forces, on one side the force of the militarists which desired the re-establishment of imperial rule and, on the

other, the force of the communists and others who desired a clean sweep of all established institutions and vested interests and a forced march towards socialism. A keen debate among all these forces, on the theoretical as well as the practical plane, was taking place in Germany during Roy's stay. His sympathies lay evidently with the communist side but he had the wisdom of listening to all and that enabled him to get a deeper understanding of the Marxism that he had learnt in Mexico. Roy was struck by the 'humanness' of the socialist leaders. He met many of them during his stay in Berlin. Prominent amongst them were Bernstein, Kautsky and Hilfferding.

Roy met communist leaders a little later as they were in jail or underground and the person who was to put him in touch with them had also been picked up by the police. But contact was established soon and he was able to meet all prominent leaders of the Communist Party of Germany. He had long discussions with them not only about Marxism but also about the contemporary political and social situation in Germany and other European countries. The discussions widened Roy's knowledge and he acquired a firmer grip on communist theory and practice. Amongst German communist leaders Roy formed firm friendship with Heinrich Brandler and August Thalheimer. It lasted throughout his life. It was personal as well as political. The three remained together inside the Comintern as well as outside it.

Roy reached Moscow in the latter half of April 1920. His reputation had preceded him. Borodin was there to receive him and arranged for his stay in the same place where he, Borodin, was staying. The same evening Roy was introduced to Chicheren and Karakhan, the Commissar and Vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs. Both talked to him about the organisation of revolutionary work in the East, including India. For some time there was the hope that revolutionary work could be organised in India from a base in Afghanistan and it was also suggested that Roy could be appointed the Ambassador to that country. No progress was made in that direction as very soon the political situation in that country underwent a change and King Amanullah, who was for some time anti-British became pro-British. As a result Indian

revolutionaries who had sought refuge in Kabul were asked to leave. These things happened not immediately but after some time. But the Comintern had to drop the plan of operating from Kabul. It did not, however, drop the plan of using Roy's services for work in the East. But more about it later.

In the next few days Roy met all prominent leaders of the Comintern, including Lenin, Zinoviev and Trotsky. Stalin was not at that time very prominent and he was not in Moscow. Roy met him a year later. Before meeting Lenin, Roy was handed over a copy of the draft of a thesis on the national and colonial question which he had prepared for the consideration of the second congress. In the left hand corner of the first page of the copy was written, "Com. Roy, for criticism and suggestions." Roy was naturally flattered that 'the greatest man of the time', as Lenin was to him, had thought of him and asked for his suggestions on an issue of great importance. He met Lenin the same day. The first remark that Lenin made, as recorded by Roy, was: "You are so young. I expected a grey-bearded wise man from the East." It was a remark made in jest. Roy has left in his *Memoirs* a memorable account of his first meeting with Lenin. In that meeting Lenin complimented Roy on his work in Mexico and stated that it could show the way to communist work in colonies and semi-colonies. Lenin asked Roy for his views on the thesis that was given to him. He could not say anything as he had not read it. He had thereafter several meetings with Lenin to discuss it.

The second congress of the Comintern met in Moscow from 23 July to 7 August 1920. The congress opened with a ceremonial inauguration in Leningrad where all delegates were taken in special trains. Roy and his wife, Evelyn Roy, attended the congress officially as the representatives of the Communist Party of Mexico. India was represented by two others, Abani Mukherjee and M.P.B.T. Acharya. However, for all practical purposes, Roy was treated as the representative of India. He spoke in the congress in that capacity and was elected to various bodies in that capacity. The first plenary session elected a number of commissions. Roy was elected to the national and colonial commission, the most important amongst them.

The discussion over Lenin's thesis on the national and colonial question took place mainly in the national and colonial commission. Roy had a serious difference with Lenin on some parts of his thesis. The difference was on the role of the nationalist bourgeoisie in the national revolutionary struggle. Roy was of the view that the nationalist bourgeoisie were keen only on securing some concessions and privileges and that they did not stand for the destruction of imperialism. Roy had expressed these views to Lenin in the course of the discussions that they had. However, it was one thing to express dissent in private and another to express it in public in a meeting of the commission and against a person of the stature and standing of Lenin. It required great courage as well as strength of conviction. Roy exhibited both in his encounter with Lenin in the first international gathering of communist leaders that he attended. But Lenin was kind and understanding. He amazed Roy by suggesting that he, Roy, should write an alternative thesis. After some persuasion, Roy agreed to write a supplementary thesis. Later, Lenin asked the commission to consider the two theses together, which was done. Some amendments were made in Roy's thesis, while Lenin agreed to substitute the words 'national revolutionary' for 'bourgeois democratic' in his thesis. The two theses were then adopted. Lenin's as the main and Roy's as the supplementary thesis. The congress adopted them in the same form on the recommendation of the commission.

The controversy between Lenin and Roy centred around the type of assistance to be extended by communist parties in colonial countries to the nationalist bourgeoisie and their organisations. Lenin recommended "temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy" while upholding "the independence of the proletarian movement". Roy insisted that the Comintern should concentrate all attention only on building up independent movements of workers and peasants. But what was to be done if such movements did not exist? The more mature Lenin knew that they would grow out of joint working with a national revolutionary movement. A recent convert to communism, Roy had a rather exaggerated idea of the strength and independence of the proletarian movement in India. Discussions with Lenin convinced him of the correctness of

the strategy and tactics recommended by him. After the congress adopted the two theses, no differences remained between Roy and Lenin and other leaders of the Comintern, either on the theoretical or on practical plane. The work that he did regarding the development of communism in India received the full support and endorsement of the Comintern. Differences arose later in 1928, but that was mainly because the Comintern discarded Lenin's thesis and resorted to an ultra-left adventurist line.

The adoption of the two theses of Lenin and Roy did not finally settle the question of collaboration between nationalist and communist forces in colonial and semi-colonial countries. It recurred from time to time and had to be considered again and again by Comintern congresses. It was, as a matter of fact, impossible to take a final decision once and for all. The question depended on the relation of forces and it changed from time to time and was different in different countries. The two theses were quoted frequently in the various phases of the Chinese revolution. Stalin referred to them twice in May 1927 and contended that Roy's supplementary thesis was more relevant to the situation than Lenin's. The controversy thus went on from time to time and no final decision was reached until Stalin liquidated the Comintern in 1943. Roy has stated in his book *My Experiences in China*: "The controversy was not definitely settled. Agreement, however, was reached on general principles that the Communist International should support the struggle of colonial people for national freedom and that this could be most effectively done through the revolutionary organisations of the oppressed and exploited masses in the colonial countries. The attitude towards the nationalist bourgeoisie was thus not definitely defined. They were to be supported as parts of colonial people, but the form and extent of the support were to be determined with the help of subsequent experience, in the light of their position in the struggle for national freedom."[3]

The second congress established Roy's position in the Comintern. He went to Moscow as an ordinary delegate. But his debate with Lenin and the thorough grasp of Marxist theory and practice that he exhibited in that debate and in

other discussions in the congress established him as a prominent leader of the international communist movement. That was an enviable position to attain and it went on improving from year to year until it received a sudden jolt in 1928.

At the end of the congress, Roy would have been elected to the Executive Committee of the Comintern. He declined the honour as he was to go East after the congress, "perhaps never to return". He was assigned the task of carrying the revolution to the East and more particularly to India. He was to open "the second front of world revolution". The task was to his liking. He took it up with enthusiasm.

By this time Roy's idea of a revolution in India had undergone a complete change. He has described his new idea in the *Memoirs* as follows : "According to my new faith, revolutions took place of necessity. No individual was indispensable. They were brought about by the operation of new social forces. The maturity of the latter was the objective condition for a revolution. Until that basic condition was created, no armed uprising should be undertaken because it was sure to fail. Social forces antagonistic to the established order must in the first place be politically mobilised and recruited in the army of revolution. Only then would arise the question of arming the soldiers ready to fight for liberation.

"Our old idea of revolution put the cart before the horse. It attached decisive importance to arms, and when the opportunity of getting them appeared to present itself, we believed that revolution was round the corner. We did not stop to consider the problem of recruiting men to carry arms. The number of members of an underground party was too small to compose an army of revolution."[4]

Roy now set about to build up 'the army of revolution'.

V

COMMUNISM IN INDIA

A FEW WEEKS after the second congress, Roy was in Tashkent[1] to begin his work of spreading the revolution to the East. The East comprised not only India but the Asian region of Russia and the vast area of Central Asia stretching from Turkey to Afghanistan. All these parts, including Asian Russia, were in those days in an unsettled condition. It was a vast area inhabited by the most backward people. They were predominantly Muslim by religion, and their allegiance to the revolution was to be won without hurting their religious susceptibilities. The revolution had established the new Republic of Turkestan, but its hold over the people was tenuous. There were many nomadic tribes and their chiefs who were yet to be brought under control. Enemies of the revolution, particularly British imperialism, were inciting them to create troubles for the new Republic. The incitement was based mainly on the non-Muslim and non-religious character of the Bolsheviks.

Before Roy left for Tashkent, he was co-opted a member of the small bureau called Mali Bureau set up the ECCI (Executive Committee of the Communist International). He was also made a member of the Central Asiatic Bureau. Sokolnikov and Safarov, two Russians prominent in the government and the party, were also members of the bureau. They were already stationed in Turkestan. But as they were busy with other things, the main responsibility of the work of the bureau devolved on Roy.

Roy left for Tashkent with two train-loads of a variety of arms and a large treasure. The plan when Roy left was to establish a base in Afghanistan and use the arms and the treasure to win over frontier tribes and through them

establish contacts with revolutionary elements in India. Later, the plan had to be dropped owing to lack of co-operation from the Government of Afghanistan. The arms and the military officers who accompanied them proved useful eventually for subduing the British inspired revolts and for imparting military training to Indian Muhajirs.

Living conditions in Tashkent were very difficult. The Tsarist officials and other upper-class Russians had fled from the place after the outbreak of the revolution. But before fleeing, they had wrought as much destruction as they could. Most buildings were uninhabitable as water–pipes were smashed, furniture was destroyed and electric wiring was torn down. Roy was assigned one such building for his residence and office. It was the former residence of the representative of the Emir of Bokhara. But where Roy occupied it, it had no furniture and fixtures except piles and piles of carpets. In winter, Tashkent was intensely cold. Heating could not be arranged as there was a grave shortage of firewood. Food was equally scarce. It was, as Roy has recorded, "a life full of hardships".

Bokhara and Khiva were two small principalities in the area which were being used by the British military for anti-Soviet propaganda and activities. After the revolution the Russian Government had granted independence to the Emir of Bokhara and the Khan of Khiva. But they still continued to play the British game. Roy had to tackle the problem. The main difficulty in the way was the strong religious sentiment of Muslim masses. For the purpose, Roy studied the *Koran* and other religious books of Islam. While taking care not to hurt the religious sentiments of the people he began to justify the revolution on the ground of equality preached by Islam. That removed the misgivings of the people. The Emir and the Khan were eventually subdued through military operations and revolution was spread to Bokhara and Khiva.

About this time, the news came that a large number of Indians had entered the area and were intent upon going to Turkey to fight for the Khilafat. They were the Muhajirs who had left India at the call of their religious leaders supplemented by the exhortations of the leaders of the Khilafat movement. Their number was variously estimated at

between thirty and fifty thousand. Some of them were captured by Turkoman rebels and were grossly ill-treated. On getting the news in Bokhara, Roy sent a detachment of the Red Army for their rescue. After rescue they were taken to Bokhara where Roy had talks with them. Most of them were religious fanatics who were keen on going to Turkey. There were a few who were educated. The prospect of military education held out by Roy attracted them and they agreed to go with him to Tashkent. They were about fifty.

In Tashkent, Roy had to make lodging and boarding arrangements for the Muhajirs who went with him. The place where they stayed came to be known as 'India House'. He had also to open for them a military and political school. The military school was started with the equipment that Roy had taken along with him. The Russian officers who went along with the equipment acted as instructors. The school had to be closed owing to strong opposition by the British Government. The Russian Government had to take notice of it in order that trade relations established after the Trade Treaty signed in March 1921 might not get disrupted. The school remained in existence from October 1920 to May 1921. The same fate befell the political school. The latter is more significant from the point of view of the communist movement which later developed in India. It contributed to the movement a number of active workers, prominent amongst them were Shaukat Usmani, Rafiq Ahmed, Akbar Shah, Fazl Ilahi Qurban, Abdul Majid and Ferozuddin Mansur. Most of them were arrested immediately after their return to India, involved in the Peshawar Communist Conspiracy Cases and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. They joined the Communist Party after their release. Shaukat Usmani was involved both in the Kanpur and Meerut Conspiracy Cases.

Another important event which took place in Tashkent was the formation of the Communist Party of India. It was formed in October 1920. Roy did not like forming the party outside when there was hardly any communist activity in the country. But he had to give in to the insistence of his colleagues. The party began with seven members. A few were added when it shifted to Moscow. After the party was formed in India, it became its foreign bureau. But apart

from Roy, it never had any significance.

Early in 1921 Roy had to go back to Moscow. He had to go back to meet a big delegation of Indian revolutionaries in Berlin who desired to be recognised by the Comintern as the sole channel through which should flow the aid to Indian revolution. It was led by Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, a brother of Sarojini Naidu and included, amongst others, Bhupendranath Dutta and Khankhoje. It disputed the representative character of Roy, to which Roy's simple answer was that he did not claim to represent anybody. He offered to work with them if they accepted the leadership of the Comintern and transferred their headquarters to Moscow. The delegation was in Moscow for more than two months and met a number of Comintern leaders, but nothing came out of its talks as its position was essentially nationalistic. Roy's position in the Comintern remained unshaken.

About this time it was realised that there was no point in keeping Roy in Tashkent as, with the opposition of Afghanistan, India could not be reached through the north-west. He was recalled to Moscow, the schools and the centre in Tashkent were closed down and he was asked to continue his work for India from Moscow. Later his headquarters were shifted to Berlin as it was realised that it was easier to develop and maintain contacts with India from that place. All these decisions were taken with the full approval of Roy.

Roy utilised his time in Moscow for writing his most important book of the period, *India in Transition*. It is a book of seminal importance. It is the first ever analysis of the Indian situation from the Marxist point of view. It was written in English, but was immediately translated into Russian, German and many other languages. It had a big sale in Europe and the USA. Its entry into India was, however, banned; but a large number of copies came in surreptitiously and were avidly read by intellectuals. The book provided exciting food for thought to young men who were groping their way from Gandhism to socialism and communism. It had a strong influence on the development of the communist movement in India. The book was an elaboration with historical and statistical materials of the point of view that Roy had presented in his debate with Lenin at the second

congress. It was only a part of the big literary project that he had visualised. He wanted to write about the decline and fall of British imperialism. A good amount of material was collected and kept for safe custody with a publisher in Berlin. It fell prey to the vandalism of Hitler. Roy also wanted to write a social history of the Indian people dating from pre-Vedic times to the modern age. He had some original ideas about the Aryans and the characteristics of the Hindu civilisation. It is a pity that preoccupation with politics did not allow him to write the books that he desired to write.

His work for India now took the form of journals, articles, manifestos and personal letters to a large number of persons. He was already contributing articles to the Comintern journal, the *Inprecor*. In 1922 he started his own journal, the *Vanguard*. It changed its name from time to time to escape the police net. It had also to change its place of publication several times. Even in Europe, Roy was not free from police attention. Once he was thrown out of Germany and had to seek refuge in France. In France also, he was not welcome for too long. He had to leave the country and go back to Germany where, luckily for him, he was allowed to stay on this occasion. England, of course, was out of bounds for him as warrants issued against him for his old revolutionary activities were still in force. Manifestos and open letters were also issued by him from time to time. But more important were his personal letters to his colleagues in the revolutionary movement, to trade union and peasant workers and to individuals expressing opinions sympathetic to the aspirations of the people. Many of these letters fell into the hands of the police. They were allowed to go to the addresses after they were copied out. Some of them were later produced in the conspiracy cases.

Roy's manifestos to the Indian National Congress began with its session in Ahmedabad held in December 1921. They were sent to the Gaya, Gauhati, Kakinada and Belgaum sessions of the Congress. More important amongst them was the manifesto to the Gaya session over which C.R. Das presided. Some utterances of Das had raised high hopes in the mind of Roy. He expected him to take a turn in the direction of mass action after the collapse of the

non-co-operation movement. A concrete plan of action was suggested, Roy hopefully looking forward to its adoption. But the contrary happened; the Congress drifted in the direction of constitutionalism. Roy used to keep himself well informed of the happenings in the country during the year and make necessary changes in the manifestos. But the general tenor used to be the same, an appeal to the rank and file to pay attention to the demands of the people, a warning that the *swaraj* the masses desired ardently could never be achieved through the constructive programmes of *khadi* and *charkha* or through Council-entry, and an exhortation to provide a new leadership. Roy never regarded the Congress as the political party of the bourgeoisie. To him, it was a mass movement of immense potentiality, but saddled with a reactionary leadership. He desired that leadership to be thrown out and replaced by a revolutionary leadership. That was the constant refrain of all his writings about the Congress. It was his conviction that the Communist Party would grow in the country out of these efforts to capture the Congress, supplemented by efforts to build up workers' and peasants' organisations and struggles.

Thanks to the vigorous propaganda carried on by Roy through books and pamphlets and letters, small communist groups came into existence by 1922 in places like Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Lahore and Allahabad. Some communist emissaries like Nalini Gupta, Abani Mukherjee, Shaukat Usmani and Charles Ashleigh had also visited India. But the groups were small and had no contact with one another. Roy suggested to them coordination and even legal organisation as a cover. He desired Dange to act as the co-ordinator, but the latter did not accept the suggestion. He desired them to attend the fourth Comintern congress and later a special conference to be held somewhere in Europe to plan work. Some money was also sent. Muzaffar Ahmad was agreeable to going, but Dange and Singaravelu Chettiar did not like the idea. The plan was therefore dropped.

However, disillusionment with Gandhism was spreading. Eager youths who had gone to jail in thousands found the cult of *khadi* and *charkha* unattractive. They were looking for a dynamic programme. Roy's programme of mass

action on the basis of workers' and peasants' struggles for their immediate economic demands attracted them. They were also attracted by the goals of communism. But Roy was away in Europe, and none of the persons he had contacted had the courage to step out and provide leadership to the youths. An opportunity came by but was not seized.

In the meanwhile the government was watching closely the activities of the communists in India and of Roy and his associates in Europe. It found that Roy was getting a growing response from dissatisfied Congressmen, from his old colleagues and from some newspapers. It knew that there was no immediate danger of a big communist movement, but it decided to strike a blow against communism before it struck roots in the country. It decided to launch a conspiracy case and started arresting those who, it knew, were active in the communist movement. The first to be arrested was Shaukat Usmani, then followed Muzaffar Ahmad and Nalini Gupta. Dange was arrested in March 1924 and the Kanpur Communist Conspiracy Case was launched. Singaravelu Chettiar was on the list of the accused but he was not arrested because of his old age and ill-health. Later the charge against him was dropped. There were two other accused: Roy and Sharma. Roy was in Europe and Sharma in Pondicherry beyond the jurisdiction of British-Indian courts. Roy was regarded as the arch-conspirator. He had to pay the price for his part in the conspiracy when he returned to India in 1931. The charge against the accused was that they had entered into a conspiracy with one another and with the Comintern for depriving the King-Emperor of his sovereignty over India, an offence punishable under Section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code. The resolutions and other declarations of the Comintern and the correspondence between the accused and Roy were cited as proof of the conspiracy. The court held the offence proved and sentenced the accused to four years' rigorous imprisonment.

Roy was not happy at the type of defence that the accused had put forward. It was a legalistic, technical and apologetic defence. Seven years later he showed, when he was prosecuted for the same offence, the type of bold, political defence that a convinced

communist could and should present.

The Kanpur Case was a damper on communist activity in the country. It took some time for Roy to devise new channels of communication and continue his work of encouraging and guiding the activity. That the setback was temporary was proved by the conference that was held in Kanpur in December 1925 to establish a communist party. The plan of the organisers was to establish a legal communist party. But the the organisers were pushed out and the communists succeeded in organising a real communist party. Roy welcomed the event as a fulfilment of a dream that he had entertained for long.

In 1925, there was a change in the agency for directing communist activities in India. The work was entrusted to CPGB (Communist Party of Great Britain). The CPGB directed the day-to-day work, while Roy provided general guidance. The *Vanguard* continued to appear and Roy kept up his correspondence with communist leaders in India. In his letters he discussed with them many problems of tactics and strategy. One of them was the role of workers' and peasants' parties which had developed in the country in 1927 and 1928. One of the notable letters of the period is the well-known Assembly Letter, so described because it was read in the Central Legislative Assembly in 1928. During this period, Roy was away in China for the first eight months of 1927 and thus unable to provide any guidance to Indian communists. Generally, there was no difference between the line recommended by Roy and the one recommended by CPGB. Both shared the same view on the world and the Indian situation as can be seen from Roy's *Future of Indian Politics* and Palme Dutt's (Palme Dutt was CPGB's intellectual guide) *Modern India.*

The difference cropped up later after the sixth Comintern congress and Roy had the misfortune of seeing all the work done by him in building up the Communist Party of India being destroyed by insane opposition to the Congress just when it was taking the shape of a mass movement against imperialism. That brought Roy to the parting of ways with the Comintern. A later chapter will discuss that development.

VI

MISSION TO CHINA

EARLY in 1927 the Comintern sent Roy to China as its representative to supervise the implementation of a new thesis that it had adopted. Roy had a big hand in drafting the thesis that was adopted by ECCI at its meeting in Moscow in November 1926.[1] The central point of the thesis was that the Chinese revolution must be thereafter developed as an agrarian revolution and that no fetish should be made of the alliance with the Kuomintang.

The Comintern and the Russian Government had been taking keen interest in developments in China for a long time. The Russian Government was interested in weakening its opponents, the imperialist powers, which had by their military operations and through trade and aid to rival warlords obtained a stranglehold over China. In contrast to them, it had in July 1919 renounced all privileges secured by the Tsarist Government. It welcomed and actively supported the nationalist movement which sought to unify the country and rid it of imperialist oppression and exploitation. Comintern's interest in China began in 1920. A couple of years later, the Kuomintang was reorganised and, on Moscow's advice, communists entered it. In the beginning all Russian leaders, including Trotsky, supported the move. Roy also held the same view.

Entry into Kuomintang paid rich dividends to communists in the form of wide support amongst workers and peasants. On the basis of that support, they were able to win many important positions in mass organisations, in the government and the army.

Complications arose, however, in 1926. Many in the Kuomintang representing landlord and capitalist interests

did not like the association with communists. The Commander-in-Chief of the nationalist army, Chiang Kai-shek, was opposed to the communists. He organised a coup against them in March 1926 in Canton and another in April 27 in Shanghai. Eventually, the Kuomintang split into two factions: the right and the left.

Communists supported left Kuomintang, but discovered later that there was little difference between the two. The Comintern which was closely watching these developments considered them at its November 1926 meeting and, deciding that a change in the line followed until then was necessary, sent Roy to effect that change. It insisted, however, on continuing the alliance with the left Kuomintang.

Roy's old friend, Borodin, was then in China. He was there since 1923. He was the chief adviser to the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) and also to the nationalist government. He had with him a number of Russian advisers including General Galen *alias* Blucher. Borodin did not like the new Comintern line. He had on that issue serious differences with Roy and gave him no assistance in implementing it. He controlled the purse-strings and had the confidence and support of the leader of the CCP, Chen Tu-hsiu.

Roy was accompanied by an international workers' delegation. Apart from him, it consisted of Tom Mann from England, Jacques Doroit from France and Earl Browder from the USA. It was to attend a Pan-Pacific Labour Conference to be held in Canton on 1 May , and Roy was keen that an Indian delegation should attend it. That did not happen because the Government of India refused passports to Indian labour leaders desiring to attend it. The conference was held eventually in Hankow towards the end of May.

Roy and his delegation reached Canton in February 1927. The nationalist government had by then shifted to Hankow, one of the three neighbouring cities collectively known as Wuhan. He had to go there, but was held up in Canton for three weeks. A plane was to take him to Hankow, but there was some engine trouble and he and his companions had to travel by chairs carried by coolies. The journey took five weeks and it was April by the time that they reached

Hankow. The long journey enabled Roy to study the situation in the countryside at first hand, but what was more important was meeting the leaders of the CCP and the Kuomintang, which was delayed considerably by the breakdown of the transport arrangement.

By the time Roy reached Canton, differences between the right wing of the Kuomintang and its left wing supported by communists had reached serious proportions. There were differences of opinion over the seat of the government—whether it should be at Nanking or at Wuhan, over the invitation to Wang Ching-wei to return, and more particularly over the alliance with communists. But there was a curious reluctance in the left Kuomintang and communist circles to talk about them. The Central Committee of the CP was aware that a great anti-communist tide had developed within the Kuomintang and that there was the danger of the right wing succeeding in winning over the moderate elements. Roy had sensed this danger in Canton and issued a warning against it. But, as the CCP was not until then willing to speak openly against Chiang Kai-shek, the warning had to be circumspect and general. The danger visualised by Roy came true when on 12 April, a few days after he reached Hankow, Chiang Kai-shek massacred communists in Shanghai. The split in the Kuomintang then became a reality. There were two nationalist governments, the leftist in Hankow and the rightist in Nanking under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek.

Differences of opinion between Roy and Borodin and leaders of the CP became sharp after the split in the Kuomintang. The differences covered many points, but they centred mainly on three issues. The issues were : one, the second northern expedition; two, the peasant revolts; and three, relations with the left Kuomintang. The third issue became the crucial issue in June when, according to Roy, the left Kuomintang was no longer an ally but an enemy, an instrument of the counter-revolution as by that time it had begun its war against workers and peasants and was moving in the direction of an understanding with the right wing headed by Chiang Kai-shek. Earlier, Roy had accepted along with Borodin and others, the necessity of collaboration with the

left Kuomintang, but he had insisted all along that the collaboration was for a purpose and should end as soon as it ceased to serve that purpose.

These differences were debated in the fifth congress of the CCP held in Hankow for two weeks from 27 April onwards. Roy put forward his point of view which was in sharp contrast with that of Borodin and Chen Tu-hsiu. On all issues the congress supported Roy and the decisions were on the lines suggested by him. He was happy at this outcome. But his happiness was short-lived. He found that the decisions were not being implemented and that different interpretations were being placed on the decisions that were taken. Roy was helpless as all effective power was in the hands of Borodin and Chen Tu-hsiu. He appealed to Moscow, but its reply was ambiguous.

Roy was opposed to the second northern expedition which he regarded as "militarily impractical, politically dangerous and socially reactionary". The congress had endorsed his view. But, when the Wuhan government started it, Borodin and the CCP supported it on the ground that failure to support it would mean a break with the left Kuomintang. The expedition petered out in the end and paved the way for reconciliation between the two wings of the Kuomintang. The debate on the expedition centred around the concept of deepening the revolution as against broadening it—Roy was for deepening it through pushing ahead the agrarian revolution in territories under the control of the Wuhan government. Borodin and the CCP opposed it on the ground that it would antagonise the landlords and militarists in the Kuomintang. In his speeches on the issue, Roy showed a remarkable grasp of the military, political and social situation in the country.

As soon as the expedition began, as predicted by Roy, the government called upon the masses to suspend all activities. Instead of fulfilling its promises, it asked the masses to make further sacrifices. While industrial workers were prohibited to strike, they were asked to work longer hours to keep the army well-supplied. Even the anti-imperialist struggle was suspended for avoiding international complications. The expedition strengthened the

position of the militarists in the Kuomintang.

In the meanwhile, the spirit of revolt had spread to the countryside and the peasants were up in arms against their age-old oppressors, the landlords and their hired local ruffians. In some places the peasants took possession of the lands they were cultivating for the landlords. In other places they drove away the landlords. These were regarded as excesses of the peasants. The Kuomintang leaders called upon the communists to control these excesses and discipline the peasants. Roy did not regard these as excesses; he was for supporting the peasants and enabling them to take possession of lands in an organised manner. His view was that peasant unions should be organised and invested with political power so that they could disarm the ruffians in the pay of landlords and create a militia as the nucleus of a revolutionary army. On this point again, there was disagreement between Roy and Borodin and the CCP leaders.

All differences centred mainly on the issue of relations with the left Kuomintang. Borodin and Chen Tu-hsiu were of the view that they should be preserved and strengthened, while Roy had reached the conclusion by June that they had fulfilled their purpose and should be discontinued in the interest of the further development of the revolutionary movement of the masses. The debate went on for some days with Moscow giving evasive and contradictory directives.

In the meanwhile, some of the militarists took things in their hands and attacked communists and their organisations. There was the revolt of Hsia Tao-you, who marched on the capital to overthrow the government. He was defeated and turned back through the spontaneous resistance of the people, but the government took no action against him. A fortnight later, a more serious revolt took place at Changsha. General Hsu Ke-hsiang and the officers under him staged a coup. As described by Roy in his *Revolution and Counterrevolution in China*, they "overthrew the provincial government, put its members in prison, dissolved the local committee of the Kuomintang, closed the political school conducted by the peasants, department of the Kuomintang, and adopted all the usual repressive measures against the mass organisations and the communists."[2] Again the government remained

inactive. Local communist and Kuomintang activists desired to resist the coup. They collected the peasants and over twenty thousand of them surrounded Changsha. However, when they were at the gate of the city, the communist headquarters in Wuhan ordered them to disperse and go back. It was clear from the incidents that the militarists were preparing to throw the communists out of the Kuomintang.

The situation was grim but not hopeless, according to Roy. He was in favour of a determined offensive. His advice was rejected. Years later, he wrote in his *My Experiences in* China: "In despair, I tried to act over the head of the impossible Political Bureau of the Communist Party. I demanded a plenary meeting of the Central Committee to be attended by local leaders. The demand was opposed on the plea that important members of the party could not leave their respective posts in those critical days. The top leaders were against the plenary session, because local workers were impatient for decisive action and would have surely endorsed my plan. As a last resort, I sought to act with the co-operation of individual comrades, Chinese as well as Russian. Galen (the Chief Military Adviser to the national government) was fully in agreement with me. Many other Russian comrades had also come around to my view by that time. But all power was centred in the hands of Borodin. Moscow had backed me up politically as against his opportunism. Nevertheless, in other respects, he was still left in the controlling position, and consequently functioned as the dictator of the Communist Party. Beingmostly his disciples, and ideologically akin to his way, the top leaders of the CP of China followed him. disregarding repeatedly the instructions of the International and in defiance of its representative on the spot."[3]

In this situation both Roy and Borodin turned to Wang Ching-wei, the leader of the left Kuomintang and the national government, as the only person who could save it. Wang Ching-wei had suspicions about the communists that they would support Tang Sheng-chi, a powerful militarist, and not him. Some actions of Borodin and the CCP had created that suspicion in his mind. The steps that Roy took to reassure Wang Ching-wei of communist support are related by him as follows in My *Experiences in China* : "On his way back to

China, he had passed through Moscow. There he was promised full support of the Soviet Government as well as of the Communist International... I managed to send a radio message to Moscow demanding the reassurance. On the other hand, to him I proposed a concrete plan of action which should be undertaken to re-establish his effective leadership of the Wuhan Government. He agreed with the plan, provided that the necessary help would be forthcoming...

"A few days later, a telegram came from Moscow with the desired assurance. Among other things, it suggested the following: 'confiscate the land; destroy the present unreliable generals; arm twenty thousand communists, and select fifty thousand worker and peasant elements to create a new army; put new worker and peasant elements in the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang to take the place of the old members; and organise a revolutionary court with a well-known member of the Kuomintang as its Chairman to try the reactionary officers'...

"It was almost too late when the urgently needed reassurance came. Meanwhile, believing that the communists had betrayed him, Wang Ching-wei had entered into negotiations with the right wing which was clamouring for the blood of the communists to propitiate Chiang Kai-shek...I thought at that juncture, a final effort must be made to regain the confidence of Wang Chin-wei. I communicated to him the message from Moscow."

Wang Ching-wei asked for a copy of the message which Roy gave him. It is reported that Wang showed it to his colleagues who were already in touch with Chiang Kai-shek. They decided to act quickly and began their offensive against the communists. As a matter of fact, they had already decided their course of action after the ultimatum they received from the Christian General, Feng Yu-hsiang, asking the Wuhan leaders to dismiss the Russian advisers and suppress the Communist Party in the interest of the unity of all nationalist forces. The ultimatum was backed by a thinly-veiled threat to attack Wuhan from the north if the suggestion was not accepted. It was the ultimatum and the conviction of the Wuhan leaders that they had more in common with Chiang Kai-shek than with communists that decided the issue, and

not Roy's giving a copy of the Moscow telegram to Wang Ching-wei.

The two wings of the Kuomintang then came together. Together they waged their war against the communists. The CPP was outlawed and thousands of communists were arrested and many were executed. Trade unions and peasant unions were also destroyed. A reign of terror was established. The Russian advisers were dismissed. Borodin left Hankow on 27 July. Roy left in late July or early August.

Roy's mission to China ended in failure. But it was the failure not of an individual but of an institution. The Comintern had tried to direct a revolution in a populous and complex country like China, sitting thousands of miles away from the scene of action. That was an ill-conceived and quixotic adventure. The position was rendered more difficult by the factional quarrels in the Comintern between Trotsky and Stalin. Roy tried his best to implement the directives that he received from time to time. But he had to work under very adverse conditions. There were serious differences between him and Borodin and the CCP who had the real power in their hands. The objective conditions were also against him. The feudal militarists and the bourgeoisie, supported as they were by foreign imperialism, had tremendous power, while compared to them, the organisations of workers and peasants were very weak.

Several people have criticised Roy for showing the Moscow telegram to Wang Ching-wei. Some went to the extent of condemning it as a betrayal. That was the propaganda that communists carried on against him when he returned to India a few years later. But that was at the worst an indiscretion. Nothing turned on it; the leaders of the left Kuomintang had already decided their course of action. The records of the Comintern do not bear out any such charge against Roy.

With the failure of his mission in China began Roy's downfall in the Comintern hierarchy. Two years later it ended in his final break with the organisation.

VII

DIFFERENCES WITH COMINTERN

DIFFERENCES in the Comintern were a reflection of differences in the CPSU (Communist Party of Soviet Union). The Comintern was from the beginning under the domination of the CPSU, because Russia was the only country which had accomplished a revolution and could place at the disposal of the central body the resources that it needed to develop revolutionary activities all over the world. In later years the domination became more obvious and also peremptory. Whoever desired to play any role in the Comintern had to be in the good books of the leaders of the CPSU, and the Comintern became more or less an agency of the Foreign Office of the Soviet Union. Roy has described well this degeneration of the Comintern in his book *Communist International.*

Differences in the CPSU assumed serious proportions after Lenin's death in January 1924. First, there was the contest for leadership between Trotsky and Stalin. Then, there were differences about the policies to be adopted by the Soviet Union. The differences can be illustrated by the two rival slogans : 'Permanent Revolution' and 'Socialism in One Country'. Trotsky has been identified with the former and Stalin with the latter. There were, of course, many fine shades and variations from time to time. With regard to these differences, Roy was solidly with Stalin as he believed in the Stalinist policy of consolidating the gains of the revolution in Russia. Many communists who did not believe in that policy were thrown out of the CPSU and the Comintern.

By 1928 Stalin had not yet smashed his enemies in the party. In order to vanquish them he thought it necessary to effect a leftward turn. Accordingly, the first five-year plan

emphasising heavy industries and collectivisation of agriculture was launched. This was an offensive on the economic front after the retreat effected by Lenin in the form of the New Economic Policy in 1921. This offensive in the national field had to have its reflection in the international field. That was secured through the decisions of the sixth Comintern congress held in September 1928 which threw overboard the policy of a united front followed until then in the political and trade union fields. It was decided to follow the policy of 'class against class' and those who did not approve it were denounced as fascists and counter-revolutionaries. A theory of capitalism having reached the third and final stage of its decay was invented for the purpose and all were called upon to launch against it an all-out offensive. Roy disagreed with all these theoretical and policy formulations and expressed his dissent against them in clear and unambiguous terms.

Roy fell from grace after the failure of his mission in China. For his fight against Trotsky, Stalin needed then a real or imaginary victory in China. As Roy failed to get it, he incurred the grave displeasure of Stalin and his henchmen. Stalin refused to meet him after his return from China and he had to go away to Berlin after putting together properly the record of his speeches, statements and other materials. A meeting of the plenum of the ECCI was held in Moscow in February 1928 to discuss the Chinese problem. Roy thought that it would give him an opportunity to put forward his point of view. He went to Moscow to attend the meeting, but was not given a hearing. He fell ill with a serious ailment of the ear while the meeting was going on. Instead of being sent to hospital meant for high Comintern functionaries, he was sent to a hospital on the outskirts of Moscow which was not equipped to give him the necessary treatment. That made his friends suspicious and they arranged for his clandestine getaway.[1] It is surmised that it was done with the help of Bukharin. That was Roy's last visit to Moscow. But for the flight, Roy might have been one of the innumerable victims of Stalin's anger.

The political attack against Roy began at the sixth Comintern congress. It was on the issue of 'decolonisation', a word first used by Bukharin in a tentative manner, as Roy

explained in a long explanatory statement that he sent to Comintern a few weeks after the congress. The word was given a distorted meaning and Roy was condemned along with a number of leaders of the CPGB including such stalwarts as Palme Dutt and A.J. Bennet. Owing to illness Roy was not present at the congress to rebut the charges. But there were others, particularly from the CPGB, who spoke out and defended Roy's point of view. But the effort was wasted. The Russian leaders had decided, as one historian has pointed out, to make 'decolonisation' a dirty word and to attack Roy on that basis. It was launched by Kuusenin on the basis of a theory that economist Eugene Varga had put forward. Varga's theory was that Great Britain had resumed its general policy of treating India as an agrarian appendage, as a source of raw materials and as a market for British export industries and that, as a result, there was more of ruralisation than industrialisation.

Roy controverted this theory of Varga and pointed out how post-war conditions had compelled Great Britain to change its old policy of obstructing the growth of industries. The 'decolonisation' that he meant was not the decolonisation of workers and peasants but of the bourgeoisie. He stated: "A gradual advance of the Indian bourgeoisie from the state of absolute colonial oppression to self-government within the British Empire is taking place. Therefore, it is not necessary for them to travel the risky path of revolution. In other words, progressive 'decolonisation' of their economic and political status makes the Indian bourgeoisie averse to revolution, and in the near future, when 'decolonisation' of their class has gone further, it will make them positively counter-revolutionary. Transfer of some political power to the colonial bourgeoisie does not weaken imperialism; because the native bourgeoisie wield this power, not to further develop the struggle against imperialism, but to suppress the revolutionary movement. This has been demonstrated by the experience in other colonial countries. 'Decolonisation' of the Indian bourgeoisie, thus, is not an 'illusion'. It is a fact which is the key to the situation."[2]

Roy made that observation in the course of a comprehensive statement that he submitted to ECCI in 1929. It is

published in full in his book, *Our Differences*.

The campaign against 'decolonisation' and against Roy was not that important. What was more important was the new line that was adopted. It was an ultra-left adventurist line. As amplified by the tenth plenum of the ECCI, it asked the Indian communists to break off relations with the Indian National Congress and leftist bodies like the Independence League, to organise a mass campaign against them as lackeys of imperialism and capitalism and as betrayers of the revolution, to liquidate the workers' and peasants' parties and to build up a new anti-imperialist united front against the Congress. In the trade union field they were asked to secede from established unions, to organise new Red Trade Unions, to intensity workers' struggles and to prepare them for a countrywide political strike. All these directives, political and trade union, were ultra-leftistic and disruptive. They drove the communists into the wilderness and reduced them to the position of a small sect.[3] This line that was imposed was directly contradictory to the line that the communists had until then followed under Roy's guidance. The new Comintern line produced equally disastrous results in many European countries. The results in Germany were particularly ruinous; they could be said to have contributed materially to the rise of Hitler. The campaign against social democrats, going to the extent of calling them 'social fascists' and regarding them as worse enemies of communists than fascists and the equally virulent campaign to split and ruin established trade unions broke the morale of workers and weakened their resistance to the growth of the Hitlerite menace.

Sometime after the congress, began the campaign for enforcing discipline. Those who did not accept the new line unreservedly were thrown out of the party and the Comintern. Members of the CPGB who had expressed dissent were forced to capitulate and a year later a new leadership was imposed. In the USA the dissenters composed the majority in the party, but in June 1929 all of them were expelled for their rightist deviations. In Germany, the group led by Brandler and Thalheimar, Roy's friends, was thrown out for the same reason. Bukharin also was not spared. The following

year he was expelled from the ECCI and the Politbureau of the CPSU. The charge against him was that of supporting the rightist elements in the Comintern.[4]

Curiously, action against Roy, the arch criminal and according to Kuusenin a 'lackey of imperialism' and father of the theory of 'decolonisation', was delayed by about a year. At the tenth plenum held in June 1929, he was again roundly condemned as a 'renegade', but actual action was taken against him six months later. The *Inprecor* of 13 December 1929, carried the following announcement: "In accordance with the resolution of the plenum of the ECCI (on the international situation and the tasks of the Communist International, para 9) and the decision of the Presidium of the ECCI of 19-12-1928 according to which adherents of the Brandler organisation cannot be members of the Communist International, the Presidium of the ECCI declares that Roy, by contributing to the Brandler press and by supporting the Brandler organisation has placed himself outside the ranks of the Communist International, and is to be considered as expelled from the Communist International."[5] No reason was given why the action was delayed so long. Very likely, Comintern authorities were expecting a recantation or at least silence. But Roy neither recanted nor remained silent. He went on giving expression to his views. He also joined other dissidents in Germany and the USA and began exerting pressure for the rectification of the line adopted by sixth congress. He wrote strong articles criticising the line in the journal of the Brandler group. This could not be tolerated and in the end he was expelled from the ranks of the Comintern.

In an open letter addressed to members of the Comintern and later published in *Our Differences*, Roy has given a picturesque description of what happened at the tenth plenum and an able defence of his position. A few extracts from the open letter will perhaps be of interest. Roy wrote : "For some time I have been standing before the 'sacred Guillotine', the mad application of which is causing such a havoc to the international communist movement. I have stood in that position for nearly a year, not shuddering with the fear for my head, but aghast at the incompetence of those who have usurped the leadership of the movement, and amazed at the

temerity with which this incompetent and irresponsible leadership is driving the movement to rack and ruin. At last has come my turn, so inexplicably delayed. At the tenth plenum of the Executive Committee of the CI, my humble head was demanded by the gent Kuusenin in his characteristic manner of shirking responsibility. Referring to my latest 'crime'—contribution to the press of the German opposition—he wondered if after the commission of such a heinous crime one could still deserve to be a comrade of those whose views he represented. The stage was set for the purpose. The 'masses' responded. The promoted cry—'a la guillotine'—was raised from the obscure corner, and one connected with the Communist International nearly from its very foundation, active in the revolutionary movement for years previously, hitherto suspected of and criticised for alleged 'left deviations', was placed automatically outside the pale of the CI."[6]

Dealing with Kuusenin's distortions of the theory of 'decolonisation', Roy stated : "Kuusenin went to the extent of asserting that in the columns of the *Vanguard* and the *Masses*, which I edited, I had for years propagated this 'social democratic theory'. The utter unfoundedness of the assertion is proved by the files of those journals. I challenge anybody to find one single passage in them which bears out Kuusenin's allegation. Then, those journals were published under my editorship as the central organ of the communist propaganda in India from May 1922 to the beginning of 1928. (I am not responsible for the first eight months of 1927 when I was away in China). During all that time, I was not once censored for right deviation." Continuing, Roy wrote: "Now it is discovered that all the time I have been a social democratic lackey of imperialism. Logically, then, it must be admitted that until the sixth congress, the CI had had a wrong point of view as regards India. If the report and the thesis of the sixth congress contains the highest wisdom of Leninism, then, as far as the colonial (particularly Indian) question is concerned, Lenin, Zinoveiv, Bukharin, Stalin, all in their respective turns, have been anti-Leninist, social democratic lackeys of imperialism. And this is precisely the purport of the resolution on the colonial as well as on other questions of the sixth congress. They represent a serious

deviation from the tactical teachings of Lenin."[7]

The letter stated in conclusion : "The crimes attributed to me I have not committed. My offence is that I lay claim to the right of independent thinking, and this is not permissible in the present critical period through which the CI is passing. I was not declared a 'renegade' and placed outside the pale of the official International, so long as I did not speak out my disagreement. The gag of silence was imposed upon me, the all-mighty apparatus depriving me of all the means of expression. In other words, for the unpardonable crime of independent thinking, I would have been quietly buried into oblivion, had I not dared raise my voice. But the duty of a revolutionary sometimes transgresses the narrow limits of arbitrary discipline...I was placed in a position where I found it was my revolutionary duty to join the opposition against the present leadership which is ruining the International.

"I disagree with all the resolutions of the sixth congress, not only with that on the Indian question. If the mistake were on one particular question, it might be advisable to wait hoping that it would be corrected in course of time. But the mistaken line pursued in India is but a small part of a huge blunder. Therefore, it is not permissible to keep quiet. The International is in a crisis which is manifested by the composition and exercise of its leadership."[8]

The open letter did not have any effect. The mad line was continued until it was corrected at the seventh Comintern congress in 1935. In the meanwhile Hitler had imposed his fascist dictatorship on Germany and compelled Stalin to reconsider the sixth congress line. The question of Roy's readmission into the Comintern was not considered even after the line was changed as demanded by him.

After his expulsion, the communists started levelling any number of charges against Roy. One charge was that he gave an exaggerated picture of communist strength in India and of his influence in that country. The other was that he misappropriated large amounts of money. Neither can it be seriously considered until one knows what reports were sent and what amounts of money were placed at Roy's disposal. Both are secrets which the Kremlin has not yet chosen to disclose. It may be stated in passing that Roy was not the only

channel through which the Kremlin and the Comintern were operating in India.

Break with the Comintern was a serious blow to Roy. It deprived him of the work that he was doing for Indian freedom. He continued to write for communist journals on India until about the middle of 1929. Thereafter even that avenue was closed. He had then to consider other ways for being of service to the Indian revolution. Imaginative and enterprising as he always was, he found one very soon. The next chapter will describe it and its consequences.

VIII

BACK TO INDIA AND JAIL

Roy was always anxious to return to India and participate actively in the struggle for Indian freedom. He accepted the suggestion to go to Moscow because Moscow was on the way to India. After the second Comintern congress, he welcomed his posting in Tashkent because that took him nearer to India. Later, he restrained his desire to go to India on Lenin's advice that he should not go until he had prepared at least a few people to work with him. After the forming of some communist groups the desire reasserted itself. He pleaded with Stalin several times to be allowed to go. It is reported that Stalin agreed to his going after he had completed his mission to China. But the mission failed. Roy lost his influence with Stalin and was eventually put outside the pale of the Comintern. He was thereafter completely on his own and knew that he could be of use to India only if he went back. He also saw with great anguish how, following the ultra-left line of the sixth Comintern congress, the communists had destroyed themselves and gravely damaged the left movement. He also saw the rise of the mass movement initiated by Gandhiji and the glorious opportunity it opened out to push the Congress ahead on the road to revolution.

Roy's mind was made up by the middle of 1930. By that time he had gathered around him a group of young Indians who accepted his point of view and were also personally devoted to him. The communists whom he had trained earlier in India and Europe preferred to stay with the Comintern. They broke off relations with Roy and joined the Comintern bandwagon to abuse and denounce him.

Roy discussed with his new friends his plan of going to India. It was approved and it was decided that three of them

should return to India immediately to prepare the ground for Roy's visit. The three who undertook the task were Taiyab Shaikh and Sunder Kabadi from Bombay and Brajesh Singh from Lucknow. They returned with a manifesto drafted by Roy suggesting how the mass movement started by the Congress could be developed by stages into a revolutionary movement for national independence as the first stage of a social revolution. The idea was to secure the acceptance of the manifesto by rank and file Congressmen and by youth leaguers and others.[1]

Roy followed in the middle of December 1930. He got down from a ship in Karachi on December 11 and then made his way to Bombay. He travelled on a false passport and had to escape police vigilance as the warrant of arrest issued against him in the Kanpur Communist Conspiracy Case was still in force. The British police had kept a watch on his activities in Europe. Very soon they came to know that Roy had left for India. The Indian police were intimated and they began to look for him all over the country.

Roy knew the fate that lay in store for him after his return to India. He knew that he would have to spend a few years in jail. That was the penalty, he knew, he would have to pay for getting the opportunity of working freely and openly for Indian freedom. His friends in Germany did not like that prospect and tried their best to dissuade him from undertaking the hazard. Roy disregarded their advice and launched upon it. He hoped that he would be able to do some solid work before the police caught up with him and lay a foundation on which he could build after his release. He did not want to offer himself for arrest, nor did he want to run away to far-off places to avoid it. He desired to be in the midst of the national movement so that he could influence it at least to some extent and win over as many as possible of the participants to his way of thinking and action.

Roy was able to avoid arrest for about seven months. He was arrested in Bombay on 21 July 1931. In Bombay, Roy was going about then under the name of Dr Mahmood. In those seven months he moved about in Bombay and some parts of Uttar Pradesh, met many Congress and trade union leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, N.M.

Joshi and B.R. Ambedkar. He also attended the Karachi session of the Congress, met there Subhas Chandra Bose and discussed with Jawaharlal Nehru the basic concepts of the now-famous Karachi Resolution. He did not have any hand in drafting it as was once believed, but it was he who had impressed upon Nehru the necessity of an economic programme for the Congress. And the most important thing that he did before his arrest was the setting up of the Roy Group in Bombay and a few other places. The Roy Group consisted of young, enthusiastic workers in the Congress and the trade union and youth movements. They acquired that name because they accepted Roy's programme and were influenced by his personality and achievements.

When Roy returned to India he was a full-fledged communist. He had broken with the Comintern but not with communism. His intention was to organise in the country a real communist party, a party which would know how to advance towards communism through a national revolution, a party that could think for itself and evolve a programme and strategy suitable to the objective conditions in the country. The Communist Party that existed, and which he had once helped to build up, was then in a shattered condition by governmental repression and the ultra-left line that it had followed since 1929. The old leaders of the party were in jail, involved in the Meerut Communist Conspiracy Case, and the leadership was in the hands of a young inexperienced group. The instructions of the Comintern to the groups were that the orders were to be obeyed without any question. Roy's desire was to replace this moribund party by a virile organisation. The first manifesto that he issued was a call to 'Organise a Communist Party'. The CPI (Communist Party of India) took it up as a challenge to its existence and concentrated during the next few years all its fire and venom against Roy and Royists. The Comintern gave it powerful backing through money and men. It was in no mood to allow 'renegade Roy' to succeed in India. After his return to India and for many years thereafter the worst hostility that Roy had to face was from the CPI, the Comintern and its adherents. He was not unprepared for it, but may not have expected that it would be so implacable and virulent.

The CI was not happy with Roy's return to India. It was afraid, as the Intelligence Bureau publication *Communism in India* had put it, that "Roy would put to good use his political sagacity, organisational ability, capacity for leadership and, above all, his remarkable personality and would attract leftists to himself, thus weakening the 'official' communist movement."[2] To counteract this development, it sent in 1930 to 1932 a number of agents. They had large funds with them which they placed at the disposal of the CPI. Even then the communists were not able to make any headway. They were then known as 'official communists' to distinguish them from Royists who were also known as communists.

When Roy returned, the Civil Disobedience Movement was already on the decline. The Roy Group tried to stop the decline through agitation and propaganda amongst Congressmen on the lines of the Roy manifesto. It set up for the purpose organisations like Youth Leagues, Navjawan Bharat Sabhas and Independence of India Committees. In the end, the movement was withdrawn on the basis of the Gandhi-Irwin pact. The Congress met in Karachi to ratify the pact. Roy was opposed to the pact and, at his suggestion, an amendment was moved at the session demanding its rejection. One Royist, Taiyab Shaikh, made a spirited speech in support of the amendment, but it did not receive any support. Later, Gandhiji attended the Round Table Conference as the sole representative of the Congress. The Royists carried on propaganda against the conference. The burden of the propaganda was that not a conference convened by the British Government but a Constituent Assembly elected by the people could frame a constitution for the country. Roy was happy to find that as a result of this propaganda and other activities, a number of left-wing Congressmen were getting attracted to his Group.

UP was then in ferment. Owing to fall in the prices of agricultural commodities, the peasants were in distress. They found it difficult to pay rents to landlords. Owing to the efforts of Jawaharlal Nehru and others, the Congress had spread into the villages. It championed the cause of peasants and advised them not to pay rents beyond a certain minimum. A no-rent campaign was taking shape in the province

by the time Roy arrived. He found in it a golden opportunity to develop a peasant movement as well as to radicalise the Congress. He placed himself at the disposal of Nehru and other Congress leaders. He went along with them on long tours, visiting a number of villages and meeting a large number of peasants. He moved about then in *khadi* clothes and was known by the name of Banerji.

The trade union movement was in disarray when Roy arrived. The communists had split the All India Trade Union Congress and later rendered it ineffective through their tactic of splitting unions and forming Red Unions. Rule or ruin was the tactic that they followed. They organised a number of wild strikes which demoralised workers. To improve the situation, Roy launched a movement for trade unity. He prepared a programme entitled 'Platform of Unity'. The attempt did not succeed immediately but in the unity that took place later, the programme played an important part. In one thing, however, Roy succeeded before his arrest and that was in rescuing the AITUC out of the clutches of the communists. That happened in Calcutta at the annual session held in July 1931. Communists then walked out and formed a new organisation called the Red Trade Union Congress. It carried on a miserable existence for a couple of years.

Roy was not happy with all that he saw in India. He realised that newspaper reports had given him an exaggerated idea of the intensity and sweep of the Disobedience Movement. Equally exaggerated were his ideas about the militancy and consciousness of workers. He had to adjust himself to the realities of the situation and also to accept the fact that the Mahatma still exercised tremendous influence over the large masses of the people. He realised that his task was very very difficult, but he was not a person to lose heart. There were many hurdles in his way. One hurdle was the stiff opposition of official communists and of people under their influence. In those days, communism and the Comintern had big glamour for all leftists. The other hurdle was his blunt opposition to the Gandhian programme and leadership. In spite of these hurdles, he achieved a good deal even though he was constantly hunted by the police.

At last the police caught up with him and, as stated earlier,

he was arrested in Bombay on 21 July 1931. He was immediately taken to Kanpur to stand trial for his part in the Kanpur Communist Conspiracy. He was tried on the basis of the same old evidence. His trial took place in jail as the government was anxious to avoid public demonstrations. He was not allowed to make his statement in court, though about the same time the communists accused in the Meerut Communist Conspiracy Case were allowed to make lengthy statements which the court was dutifully taking down word by word. The sentence of transportation for twelve years inflicted upon him was also savage compared to the sentence of four years' imprisonment imposed in 1924. It was later reduced in appeal to six years' imprisonment. Imperialism had at last succeeded in imprisoning its biggest foe whom it had been hunting since 1915. Roy was in jail and incapable, it thought, of doing any further 'mischief' at least for the next few years.

The expectation was not fulfilled for the government had not taken into consideration Roy's ingenuity and his ability to win the support and sympathy of warders and other prison officials and of prisoners, ordinary and political. He established contact with the outside world within a week or two of his imprisonment. The contact, though broken many a time owing to change of warders and transfers from one jail to another, was maintained in some way or other throughout the period of his imprisonment. Roy utilised the contact for sending out letters, manifestos, articles and even manuscripts of a couple of books. *China in Revolt* published under the pen name S.K. Vidyarthi in 1935 was smuggled out of jail. It was republished in 1941 in Roy's name as *My Experiences in China. Our Task in India*, which became the manifesto of the Royist Revolutionary Party of the Working Class of India, was drafted in jail by Roy and smuggled out. The defence statement that he was not allowed to make was similarly taken out and published as *My Defence*. Amongst the letters that he sent out, the most well-known are *Letters to the Congress Socialist Party*. It is on record that he sent a couple of letters to Jawaharlal Nehru. A few others are also noted. He sent out a few articles as well which were published in *The Mahratta* of Poona and *The Advocate* of Bombay. It is not

necessary to give a full list of these illegal activities. The point to be noted is that never once was he or his accomplices caught. Jail superintendents and others had suspicions about many; some of them would be transferred but nothing could be proved against them. Roy's cell was also searched many a time, his writing facilities were withdrawn for some time. But nothing could be ever established against him. Amongst his accomplices were some political prisoners and also some warders and ordinary prisoners. Some of the latter would in later years contact Roy in meetings and conferences and were always received with courtesy and kindness.

Ordinarily, Roy was a well-behaved prisoner. He obeyed all rules; he did his allotted work without fail. But he had decided from the beginning not to obey one rule, the rule not to maintain any contact with the outside world. He broke that rule continuously throughout his period of imprisonment. It was by breaking that rule that he was able to send out material for publication and for guidance of those who were looking up to him for leadership.

Officially, Roy was allowed to write only one letter a month. Its length was prescribed and sometimes passages were struck out. He wrote that letter to his friend and colleague, Ellen Gottschalk, who after Roy's release came to India, married him and made India her home. Ellen preserved those letters. They were published in 1941 as *Letters from Jail*. The *Letters* is a fascinating book. It throws light on the non-political and human sides of Roy. It shows what a cultured and sensitive person he was and gives a glimpse of his wide knowledge and all-embracing interests.

Life in jail shattered Roy's health. He was proud of his 'iron constitution', but it could not stand the rigours of jail life that were imposed upon him. The most oppressive was the summer heat. He had to stand it for the first three years in Kanpur and Bareilly. Inspite of many representations, his own and those of his friends in India, Europe and America, he was not removed to a cooler place in the hills. In 1934 he became so alarmingly ill that during summer months he was removed to Almora and brought back again to Bareilly after the summer was over. The next year he was taken to Dehra Dun when the weather became hot and kept there until his release.

Roy suffered from dilation of heart and pain in the chest and slow fever from time to time. Many eminent persons in India and the world, including the famous scientist, Albert Einstein, made representations to the Government of India and England for humane treatment to Roy. Jawaharlal Nehru also took personal interest in the matter. But all that proved ineffective. As an undertrial, Roy was an A class prisoner. After conviction he was B class. Even the classification was not changed in spite of many representations by the prisoner and his friends outside.

In spite of his ill-health, Roy did plenty of writing in jail of a strictly legal nature. For the writing he was supplied one bound notebook at a time with pages numbered and authenticated. A new notebook would be supplied only after the first one was deposited. This was most unsatisfactory for carrying on any serious study. Despite this difficulty, Roy filled with his writing nine such notebooks of about a thousand pages each. On release he brought them out along with him. A good part of what he wrote was published later as books. *Fascism, Materialism, Historical Role of Islam, Ideals of Indian Womanhood* are amongst the books that were made from those hand-written notebooks. A part is still not published. It consists of Roy's writings on philosophical consequences of modern science.

The arrest of Roy did not kill the Roy Group. It continued and developed both in the political and trade union fields. The Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India stated in its *History of the Communist Party of India* the following about the work of the Group : "Almost all the agents he had raised in India from Europe had remained loyal to the Comintern, abandoning Roy. Yet, by the end of 1934, Roy's new followers had shown excellent results. They had consolidated their position in the AITUC, secured the affiliation to it of over 40 labour organisations and had set up a permanent office in Calcutta. The AITUC was gradually reassuming the former position as leader and organiser of the trade union movement in the country." It then paid the following tribute to Roy : "It was only the genius of Roy, that could have accomplished so much single-handed in the short time that he had spent in India since his return. He inspired and guided his followers

even from jail. The progress of the communist movement in India in subsequent years has shown how right were the tactics that Roy advocated."[3]

Roy kept himself remarkably well informed about the political situation in the country and abroad. Many changes had taken place during his period of imprisonment. He had thought about them and had also planned his line of action in the new situation that had arisen. On release he did not have to ask, as usual, time for considering the situation. He was ready with his answers. He jumped into the arena without any hesitation to continue the political work which prison walls had failed to stop.

IX

IN AND OUT OF CONGRESS

Roy was released from the Dehra Dun jail on the morning of 20 November 1936 after an imprisonment lasting five years and four months. He was received at the jail gate by a couple of Congress leaders, but a demonstration was avoided because of the weak condition of his health.

After release, Roy was taken to the residence of Khurshid Lal, chairman of the municipality, and prominent Congress leader. He received there Nehru's message inviting him to Bareilly to attend the Provincial Political Conference and thereafter to Allahabad to stay at his place for rest and recoupment. Some of Roy's associates from various parts of the country had also collected there to meet him and welcome him back in their midst. He was very happy to meet them.

The representatives of the press were eager to meet Roy and know from him his immediate plan and programme. On their insistence he issued a short statement which was to the following effect: "On the completion of six long years of imprisonment, I am glad to address a few words to the people of India. My message to these fellow-victims of imperialism is: Rally in millions under the flag of the National Congress as a determined army fighting for democratic freedom. To attain this much desired goal, we not only require a clear vision of it, but a definite plan of action. I shall endeavour for the creation of those essential conditions for freedom. I find it appropriate to add that socialism or communism—which mans the same thing—is not the issue of the day. Real socialists or communists must realise that, if they wish to play a part in the struggle for freedom of the Indian masses, national independence is the immediate objective. All the anti-imperialist forces should be rallied with the slogan of

democratic freedom to be realised in the establishment of a government of the people and by the people. The National Congress is our common platform. I have not been formally connected with the Congress. But all these years I have worked for the strengthening of the Congress by seeking to radicalise and democratise it. And henceforward, to facilitate my work, I shall get myself formally enrolled as a member of the Congress. I am determined to show to the people of India that communists are not alien elements within the body-politics of India, but are the sons of the soil fighting as the vanguard of the army of national freedom under the banner of the Indian National Congress."[1]

The same evening Roy left for Bareilly to attend the political conference and to meet Nehru. At Bareilly he was enrolled a member of the Congress, and was elected a delegate to the Faizpur session of the Congress, a member of the UPCC Executive Committee. Thus began Roy's entry into the Congress. He had all along advised communists to join the Congress and work within it for activising and radicalising it. It was on that issue that he had broken with the Comintern regarding its directive to boycott and fight the Congress as ultra-leftist and adventurist. This was the first time that he was getting the chance of joining the Congress and working within it.

Thereafter Roy attended the Faizpur session of the Congress held in December 1936. Nehru presided over it. In his presidential address Nehru made a special reference to Roy and welcomed him into the fold of the Congress as a veteran fighter for freedom. Roy was given a place on the dias and was provided a hut in the leader's camp. At the session Roy spoke in the Subjects Committee on the Constituent Assembly. It was a speech unusual for a Congress audience. It was delivered in slow measured words without any attempt at rousing passions. It was an eloquent appeal to reason. Roy pointed out in the speech how the Congress must start thinking in terms of capture of power if its rejection of Reforms was to be effective, how Congress committees could develop as organs of power with the Congress itself, functioning as a Constituent Assembly. He outlined a concrete programme of action for involving the large masses in the

national struggle by identifying it with the people's struggles for their immediate demands. The speech had a profound effect upon the audience. Left-wing intellectuals who were present in a good number were thrilled by it. They felt that Roy had opened before them what they were seeking, the road to revolution.

In Faizpur, Roy had his first face-to-face meeting with Gandhiji. The meeting was cordial, but the conversation that took place disclosed to both the gulf that separated them. Roy gently refused to join the prayer meeting to which he was invited. That in a sense closed the door on his entry into the Gandhian family that ruled the Congress. The meeting reinforced Roy's conviction of the necessity of developing an alternative leadership.

The election campaign opened immediately after the Faizpur session. The elections were to the new provincial legislative assemblies which were to come into existence according to the Government of India Act, 1935. The Congress was pledged to wreck the Reforms, but had decided to contest the elections rather than boycott them. Roy participated in the election campaign in Maharashtra and Karnataka.

In April 1937 Roy began the publication of his weekly journal *Independent India*. The journal enabled him to express his views from week to week on all national and international developments in a clear and forthright manner. Nehru and Bose welcomed the publication; but Gandhiji, when approached, advised Roy to render 'mute service'. The advice was not accepted. The Roy Group which had grown up became more active after Roy's release. Its membership increased and it became a powerful factor in the political and the trade union field.

About this time Ellen Gottschalk to whom Roy had regularly sent his letters from jail came to India. She came with the intention of giving permanent companionship to Roy. Soon they were married and she became Ellen Roy. In her, Roy found not only a loving wife but also an intelligent helper and close collaborator.

Later in the year Roy toured Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, carrying everywhere his message of activising and democratising the Congress. In January 1938 he went to

Bengal. That was his first visit to the province of his birth after a lapse of over twenty years. He was welcomed as a hero and his speeches wherever he went were heard with rapt attention. Hundreds of left-wing intellectuals joined the Congress at his call. Thereafter he toured extensively Bihar and UP.

By this time Roy had made a home for himself in Dehra Dun. It was at 13, Mohini Road. It consisted of an old, deserted bungalow with a big compound with tall trees but overgrown with shrubs. In a short while the shrubs were removed and a lovely garden was developed in the compound. The place became the permanent residence of the Roys, to which they returned after their regular annual tours. The place was away from the city and gave Roy the quiet that he desired. It became in later years the frequent resort not only of Royists but also of social and political workers of many varieties and of Indian and foreign scholars. Everybody was welcome there and was accorded the frugal hospitality that it could afford.

Before beginning his work in the Congress, Roy clarified through a statement the line that he proposed to follow. The statement stated *inter alia:* "The object of my political activity (as soon as health and other considerations will permit me to undertake it) will be to strengthen the National Congress as the organ of an effective struggle against imperialism. Freedom from imperialist yoke and democratisation of the country, politically as well as economically, are the essential conditions for the reconstruction of Indian society in such a form as will have no place for mass poverty and all the regrettable cultural, intellectual and moral consequences thereof. In other words, I shall endeavour to unite and strengthen those elements in the Congress which have already realised that national freedom is but a necessary stage on the road to a greater freedom.

"It is my firm conviction that an effective struggle against imperialism can be conducted only under the leadership of those who are inspired by revolutionary social ideals. I am of the opinion that simple talk about independence will not take us far towards the much-coveted goal. Our immediate objective is not socialism; but it is a mistake to place political

freedom and establishment of socialism in water-tight compartments of history. All sincere and earnest well-wishers of the masses must realise that the economic evils that are eating into the vitals of Indian society cannot be eradicated unless larger and larger part of the fruit of their labour remains in the possession of the producers of wealth: that is the workers and peasants. So in order to serve its historical purpose, national freedom must be defined as the establishment of such a form of government as would give real political power to the masses. That is to say, national freedom must be conceived as genuine democratic freedom. I shall place before the nationalist movement a clear programme of democratic revolution, accompanied with a concrete plan of action. That is the only way towards a more effective struggle against imperialism. Those engaged in the struggle must know exactly what they are fighting for. We cannot go very far with propaganda and agitation. Political consciousness of the masses should be developed. Anti-imperialist forces must be organised in the fight for concrete demands. The Congress organisation and leadership must be democratised, must be brought under the influence of the rank and file. I shall work for that purpose."[2]

The statement did not please the right-wing leaders of the Congress. They also knew of Roy's opposition to Gandhism. Roy's entry into the Congress was not therefore welcome to them. After the first few weeks they began to look upon him with suspicion. The suspicion soon turned into hostility. Roy experienced it at many places that he visited. Roy's suggestions on various issues were hardly ever considered on merits. They used to be generally rejected on the ground that they did not accord with 'our way'.

Curiously enough Roy met with equal hostility from the organised left-wing groups. The CSP (Congress Socialist Party) was then a growing force in the Congress. It was a curious political phenomenon. There were serious differences in the leadership even on basic issues. It called itself a socialist party, but it still believed in many Gandhian tactics like boycott of elections and legislatures and offices. It had no fundamental difference with the right-wing leadership of the Congress; it desired the leadership to follow the Gandhian

path a little more energetically. It was angry with Roy because he wanted it to function not as a socialist party, but as the left-wing of the Congress and work for the development of an alternative leadership. It became more angry when many Royists who had joined the party left it on Roy's advice in batches. Roy's view on the CSP was briefly as follows : "The Congress Socialist Party is either an organisation of the left wing in the Congress, or a genuine Marxist socialist party. If it is the former, then it cannot be a real socialist party. If it is the latter, then it must adopt the plan of action and the organisational form of a communist party. With its present programme and organisational form, the CSP tends to be a reformist social-democratic party. On the one hand, it does not help the organisation of the left-wing in the Congress; and on the other hand, it hinders the growth of the Communist Party."[3]

This logical, clear formulation was not acceptable to the CSP. For years it kept hovering between the two alternatives until years later it was forced out of the Congress.

This CP (Communist Party) group was more hostile to Roy. It did not like the growth of Roy's influence in the Congress. By the time Roy entered the Congress, the CP had dropped, under Moscow's instructions, its opposition to the Congress and had begun to work within it. Roy had also declared that, after the change of line effected by the seventh congress, he had no differences with the Comintern. Under the circumstances, the CP should have extended its co-operation to Roy. But that did not happen as Moscow could not tolerate Roy's independent thinking. Consequently, Roy did not get any help from the CP group in his work in the Congress.

There were also serious differences of opinion on many issues of tactics and strategy. Both the CSP and the CP and other leftists were opposed to office-acceptance. To Roy, it was a minor issue. But he was also of the opinion that offices, accepted with a definite programme, could be utilised for the mobilisation and organisation of the masses. Collective affiliation was another point of difference of opinion. The CSP and the CP desired workers and peasants to join the Congress not individually but through the collective affiliation of their organisations. Roy was for individual membership as he

thought collective affiliation would weaken the Congress. He had earlier recommended collective affiliation, but had changed his view on closer thinking. Another point of difference was on the organisation of the Kisan Sabhas (peasants' organisations). Roy held the view that Congress committees in villages should themselves function as Kisan Sabhas, while the others wanted Kisan Sabhas to be organised as independent organisations. The most significant difference, however, was on the issue of leadership. While Roy pleaded for an alternative leadership, the others desired only some changes in the existing leadership. These differences precluded the possibility of any common ground between the Roy Group and the CSP and the CP.[4]

The second election of Subhas Chandra Bose as the President against the desire of Mahatma Gandhi in 1938 created a crisis in the Congress. On the old guard refusing to co-operate with him, Roy regarded it as an opportunity to establish an alternative leadership in the Congress. The CSP and the CP did not accept that view; later Bose resigned; and the old Gandhian leadership reasserted its hold on the organisation. That prompted Roy to get together his adherents in the Congress into an organisation. It was called the League of Radical Congressmen. It held its inaugural conference in Poona in June 1938. Its programme was the same as that of the Congress. It demanded energetic action for the fulfilment of that programme and a change in leadership in order to secure it. The League secured a good measure of support all over the country. Later Bose organised the Forward Bloc. In the beginning it was expected that it would bring together all left groups in the Congress. That did not happen and it became one more left group.

In 1940 Roy contested the election to the presidentship of the Congress. He did so, not so much to win, as to assert the right of dissident elements to contest for the highest post in the organisation. He contested on the platform of the necessity of an alternative leadership. The other left groups did not support him, but be won in the contest about ten per cent of votes.

Roy attached great importance to his work in the Congress. But that was not the only thing which attracted his

attention. He paid attention to the trade union movement as also to the movement of the people of the native States for responsible government. He was in touch with student and youth organisations. He delivered many lectures on Marxism and communism and social revolution. He paid particular attention to the renaissance movement as he was convinced that the development of a rational, scientific outlook was essential for the success of the political movement. Roy was in those days the one and only political leader to stress the necessity of a philosophical revolution. In that period he did plenty of political writing. A number of his books were published. Prominent amongst them were *Fascism, Historical Role of Islam, Our Problems* and *Letters to the CSP.*

Clouds of war were hanging over the horizon for several years. Many, including Roy, had observed them and warned the people against the threat of war. The clouds burst suddenly in September 1939 and the world found itself in the throes of a war. The war that broke out was not the war that Roy and many others had predicted. They had predicted an imperialist war of Nazi Germany against Soviet Russia with the help and co-operation of imperialist England and France. The war that broke out was a war amongst imperialist powers, Nazi Germany and fascist Italy on one side and England and France on the other. It was an unexpected kind of war and it was not easy to recognise its social character and significance.

To leftists in the country, to the CSP, the CP and the Forward Bloc, it was clearly an imperialist war as England was involved in it. Their anti-British sentiment left them in no doubt that it must be resisted at any cost. This was an opportunuty which India must seize to win her independence. The CP was in the same camp until Hitler attacked Russia in June 1941. They all urged the Congress to start immediately an anti-war movement.

Gandhiji's first reaction was of unconditional support to England in her war against Nazi Germany. Nehru was more or less of the same view as he was a convinced anti-fascist and had for many years urged England and France to begin an anti-fascist war. These initial reactions were tempered in course of time, in the case of Gandhiji by considerations of

non-violence and, in the case of Nehru, by considerations of politics. He had to keep in mind the anti-British sentiments of the people which became more intense with every defeat of the people. The Congress began by resigning ministerial offices as a protest against the Viceroy's action involving India in the war without consulting the Central Legislative Assembly or the leaders of the people. It then moved on to the position of conditional co-operation. But the Viceroy and the British Government refused to fulfill the conditions and thus pushed the Congress in the direction of a struggle which culminated in the Quit India Movement in August 1942. It is not necessary to describe here the tortuous course that led to the movement.

Roy approved neither the course the Congress had adopted nor its attitude towards the war. His own reaction he expressed in a statement issued on 6 September 1939 : "All freedom-loving people will congratulate the British Government on the decision, even though much belated, to put an end to Hitlerism which it has been encouraging all the time. Had the decision been taken earlier, the freedom of many European countries would have been saved."[5] He spent the next few months trying to persuade the Congress leaders not to adopt a hostile attitude towards the war. As a member of the AICC, he wrote to the Congress President and also took many other steps to stop the Congress move in the direction of a struggle. He did not succeed and that brought to an end his association with the Congress.

Roy had a hard job convincing his associates as well. For their edification, he prepared in October a thesis on the war which explained how it was not an imperialist but an internecine war which did not invite the application of the Leninist dictum of opposition to an imperialist war. If the war continued, it was pointed out, it might end in the defeat of Hitlerism and as such, any war resistance movement in countries fighting against Hitler would be positively harmful. By then the war had reached what has been called the phoney state which might have resulted in a stalemate. But early in April 1940 Hitler began his blitzkrieg and by the end of June conquered practically the whole of western Europe. All free institutions in those countries were suppressed and puppet

regimes established in order to use their resources for winning the war. England alone remained in the field and freedom and democracy all over the world appeared to be nearing their end.

These catastrophic developments in Europe had a profound effect on Roy. He realised that the war had now become a people's anti-fascist war and all energies must now be devoted to ensure its success. The anguish of his mind will be clear from the following observation that he made towards the end of May at a study camp in Dehra Dun : "Every morning I open the newspaper with a shudder. I have no love for imperialist France and Britain. But I cannot think of the possibility of fascisation of Europe without horror. The rise of fascism in Germany delayed the revolution for at least a generation. If fascism succeeds in establishing its domination over the whole of Europe, then good-bye to revolution and good-bye to Indian freedom as well."[6]

At that time Roy suggested to the Congress the organisation on 14 July, the French Revolution day, of demonstrations all over the country to express sympathy and solidarity with France which had just been conquered by Hitler. The suggestion was turned down as inappropriate. Thereafter the AICC met in Poona. Roy submitted a resolution calling for active participation in the struggle against fascism. The resolution was not considered.

The League of Radical Congressmen then decided to organise anti-fascist demonstrations on 1 September, the anniversary of the declaration of the war. The Congress prohibited them. On the Radicals organising them, disciplinary action was taken against them. The UPCC expelled Roy on that ground. Later, the expulsion was cancelled and he was allowed to resign. Thus ended Roy's and the Radicals' association with the Congress. This happened about eleven years after the end of his association with the Comintern. In both cases, the association ended because Roy insisted on thinking for himself and following the path which he considered right.

X

WAR AND REVOLUTION

AFTER the break with the Congress, the League of Radical Congressmen was converted into the Radical Democratic Party (RDP). The inaugural conference was held in Bombay in December 1940. Roy was the friend, philosopher and guide of the party. His idea was to build it up as a people's party. He had wanted a people's party for long. For many years he had hoped that the Congress would take that shape and had worked for bringing about that transformation. The hope ended when in 1940 the Congress refused to support the anti-fascist war. The need of a people's party did not, however, disappear. Roy expected the RDP to play that role.

In the years of the war, for Roy, the sole test of a man's or an organisation's progressive character was his or its attitude towards the war. The war was the supreme event of the period. The fate of the world depended upon it. Whoever supported it and worked for its success was a progressive, while others were reactionaries and enemies of progress. On that test Winston Churchill, the leader and main organiser of the British war effort, was a progressive and a revolutionary; while Gandhiji, Nehru and the Congress belonged to the other category. Roy, therefore, felt no compunction in helping or working with the British or the Indian Government for winning the war, while he felt it his duty to criticise the Congress and its leaders and point out their mistakes. That made him very unpopular and he became the target of many abusive and malicious attacks. But that did not deter him; he pursued his path of duty unmindful of the abuse that was showered on him.

The following two quotations from Roy's writings in the early period of the war will give an idea of the intensity of his

feeling. He wrote on one occasion : "We want the defeat of fascism, because we are revolutionaries, because we know that the defeat of fascism will weaken imperialism. Just think for a moment : What is going to happen, if fascism is victorious? A situation would be created, in which the forces of revolution throughout the world will be suppressed, and the cause of our Indian freedom will be also jeopardised. Therefore, we do not want fascism to be victorious. If we really want fascism to be destroyed, why should we not do anything and everything to bring about its destruction?"[1]

On another occasion he wrote : "The fight against fascism must be the immediate object of all fighters for freedom and democracy. Any policy which will not accept this as the point of departure will be wrong. Fascism is the instrument forged to bolster up a system which has decayed throughout the world. With its destruction, the system itself will collapse. A free India will then take her rightful place in a world of free men engaged in the task of building a higher civilisation. Therefore, India should participate in the fight, irrespective of imperialist Britain's policy towards us. The fighters for Indian freedom should co-operate with British democracy, as distinct from British imperialism, for the common cause."[2]

Roy's support to the war was motivated to some extend by his concern for the state of freedom and democracy in Europe and for the fate of European civilisation. No other national leader except Nehru shared that concern. Nehru was, therefore, unhappy at the turn the national movement was taking, but he could not break away from it. Roy was more free to strike out his own path. Roy was deeply pained by the prospect of Europe relapsing into barbarism as a result of the triumph of fascism. These were dark days, indeed, when Europe was lying prostrate at the feet of Hitler. The poignant articles that Roy wrote during those days depicting Europe's condition and suggesting a way out were later collected together in a book entitled, *Whither Europe?* Still later they were incorporated with a few modifications into his bigger book, *Russian Revolution.*

Roy was not oblivious at the same time of the problem of Indian freedom. His contention, however, was that India could be free only in a free world. If fascism triumphed, India

would not be free; she would have only a change of masters. British masters would be replaced by German or Japanese masters. On the other hand, a successful fight against fascism would weaken imperialism to such an extent and would release such social forces as would make it impossible for Britain to hold India in bondage any longer.

He wrote at that time : "If fascism wins, not only will the world go to the dogs, but together with the world, India will sink into barbarism. Therefore, not only for the freedom of the world, of the victims of fascism abroad, but also for the very chances of the eventual success of our own struggle for freedom, we must see that this greatest menace to all freedom is destroyed."[3] A war against fascism was, therefore, he argued, a war for Indian freedom and deserved the full support of all Indians. What Roy foretold came true, but was not at that time believed by the nationalists.

At the time the sentiment in the country was predominantly anti-British and therefore pro-fascist. It was fomented by the CSP, the CP, the Forward Bloc and other leftists and also by militant nationalists in the Congress. It was aided by the serious reverses that Great Britain suffered in the early years of the war and by the failure of the Government of India to grant any of the demands made by the Congress. The government was suspicious not only of the Congress but also of others like the Radicals who offered unconditional support to the war. Referring to this position, Roy said on one occasion : "We stand today between the devil and the deep sea, so to say. Narrow-minded nationalists carry on a campaign of abuse against us because they do not understand the issues involved, nor can they appreciate the values at stake. On the other hand, the government is suspicious because we are avowed revolutionaries. But the courage of conviction and a clear vision of the goal will enable us to steer through the dangerous waters between Scylla and Charybdis."[4] During those days there were from time to time rumours about Roy's inclusion in the Viceroy's Executive Council. They proved wrong, but by the sheer force of his personality and his strenuous work, he succeeded in winning the confidence of some key persons in the government. That enabled him to carry on his work a little more freely and vigorously.

In June 1941, Germany attacked Russia fulfilling the prophecy made by Roy that the anti-fascist war would spread to Russia and involve her as a combatant. That did not bring about any change in the Congress attitude towards the war. Early in 1942 the war reached India. Japan had joined the war and in a few months had liquidated the mighty British Empire in South-East Asia. There were bomb strikes in Madras and Calcutta and there was panic all over the country. The Government of India had no adequate plans and arrangements for the country's defence. The Cripps Mission came at this critical time to win over the Congress and the Muslim League. The mission failed. The Congress continued its non-co-operation and ultimately began its resistance movement in August 1942. Roy was deeply pained by this development. He regarded it as criminal neglect of the defence of the country and shameful betrayal of the anti-fascist forces. He stood solidly against the 'Quit India' movement. Roy and the Radicals had to pay heavily for their opposition to the movement which, many thought, was the final struggle against British imperialism. They were abused and ostracised and stoned and assaulted in many places.

The defence of the country, Roy stated, was the duty and responsibility of the people. The foreign government might, if defeated, abandon the country to its fate, but the people and its leaders cannot adopt that callous attitude. He was in Calcutta when the panic was spreading. He addressed several meetings and talked to the people about guerrilla warfare and people's defence committees. It had some steadying influence. About this time industrial workers were running away from factories, fearing bombing and enemy reprisals. It was necessary to keep them at their places of work, so that production might continue unabated through propaganda and other reassuring activities. The government offered some financial help for this work. It was offered to the All India Trade Union Congress and to the Indian Federation of Labour, the new organisation formed under Roy's leadership on the platform of full support to the war and war effort. Roy accepted on behalf of the Federation the help that the government had offered. It was of the order of Rs 13,000 a month. It continued for about two years. The entire amount was

spent for propaganda and for setting up workers' committees to prevent the spread of panic. Detailed accounts of the money spent were submitted to the satisfaction of the Accountant-General. The acceptance of the help, however, provided one more excuse to the critics and enemies of Roy. A virulent campaign was let loose against him and his colleagues.

Roy was impervious to all this vile abuse and unjust criticism. To him, work for the war and for helping war effort was work for the social revolution to which he had dedicated his life. A social revolution was taking place in all countries involved in the war. The vested interests were being swept away and the underprivileged working class was coming to occupy a leading position. He had seen this happen before his very eyes in Great Britain. He expected the same thing to happen in India, if the people co-operated with the war effort consciously and purposefully. He was of the opinion that, on the Congress taking up the responsibility of developing the war effort, the dynamics of the situation would give it the power it was demanding. To him, the war was an international civil war. The defeat of fascist powers would, he was convinced, bring about the defeat of fascist elements in each country. It is with this conviction that the revolutionaries co-operated during the war years with British imperialism which was soon to give way, as he had predicted, to an enlightened and vigilant British democracy. Indian independence was delayed by a few years because his advice was not accepted; but when it came in August 1947 it came peacefully and constitutionally because the war had brought about imperialism's replacement by a democracy. Imperialism would wither away, Roy had foretold, with the defeat of the fascist powers. The liquidation of British, French and Dutch imperialism in South and South-East Asia in the wake of the end of the war bears testimony to the truth of that statement. No political scientist could have asked a better confirmation of the prophecies that he had made.

By the end of 1942, it became clear that the war would end in the defeat of the fascist powers. When that became clear Roy began to think of post-war developments in India. He had no doubt that India would become free. He considered it

necessary, however, to give thought to the economic and political structure of free India. He wrote a series of articles in his journal *Independent India*, on economic planning, setting out his ideas on the type of economic plan that should be framed. On the basis of those ideas three of his colleagues, G.D Parikh, V.M. Tarkunde and B.N. Banerji, prepared in 1944 a concrete ten-year plan with an investment of Rs 15,000 crores. It came to be known as the People's Plan in contradistinction to the Bombay Plan prepared about the same time by a group of industrialists. The basic feature of the People's Plan, which was essentially Roy's plan, was its emphasis on agriculture and social services and its self-financing character. It is a pity that, when the era of planning began in the country in 1951, the government and the planners did not pay any attention to it.

A year later Roy prepared his outline for the country's political structure. Political reconstruction was as necessary as economic reconstruction. That was as a matter of fact the basis of the People's Plan. The People's Plan was, therefore, followed in a few months by the draft of a *Constitution of Free India*. It came to be known as the *Draft Constitution*. It is based on the eighteen principles accepted by the RDP at its inaugural conference and popularised by it since then. It was prepared by Roy and released for public discussion in December 1944.

The draft deals only with 'fundamental questions and controversial issues', leaving the details to be filled in later after the acceptance of the 'outline'. It visualises a democratic State. It is based on certain fundamental social and political principles. It provides for the "disappearance of the feudatory States and their incorporation with the neighbouring provinces according to the principle of linguistic and cultural homogeneity." More important is the following basic and new feature of the Constitution : "The draft visualises organised democracy as the source of all constitutional authority—the instrument for the exercise of popular sovereignty. The experience of history is that atomised individual voters cannot make democracy prevail. Organised democracy will eliminate the difficulties of holding elections in a vast country. It makes combination of the legislative and executive

functions of the State possible. The separation of these two functions has invariably vitiated democratic practice and reduced sovereignty of the people to a mere formality." In support of this and other innovative features, the draft stated : "There is a growing volume of opinion that the pre-war world cannot be restored. It must be reconstructed politically as well as economically. And if the reconstruction is to be real, there must be some relation between political rights and economic power. Only on the basis of such a relation can a really democratic Constitution be operated." In conclusion it asserted :"Out of the melting pot of the war, a new world will rise. India will be a part of that world. This draft presents a picture of that New India."[5]

A good deal of propaganda was carried on during the rest of the war period for the People's Plan and the Draft Constitution. They embodied some of the features of radical humanism which became the driving force of Roy's activities in the next and the last phase of his life.

XI

TOWARDS RADICAL HUMANISM

IN THE next and last phase of his life Roy moved away from communism and began his journey towards radical humanism. Radical humanism was the new, all-embracing philosophy of life that he evolved after discovering the faults and shortcomings of communism.

What happened during and immediately after the war had a big unsettling effect on the ever-inquiring mind of Roy. It compelled him to re-examine many communist doctrines and theories. He had accepted communism as the philosophy of freedom. But in actual practice, he found, that it had established in Russia, where it had triumphed, a regime of tyranny and slavery. He was shocked and distressed when he found, at the end of the war, Stalin throwing away the moral leadership of progressive forces which was his, and trying to embark on a military conquest of Europe. Roy realised then, on the basis of the new information that became available, that some of the tactics and policies that Russia adopted during the war under Stalin's leadership, which he had supported, were equally objectionable, narrow and opportunistic, and that Russia had degenerated into a nationalistic State. Instead of laying the blame for these mistakes and misdeeds on any one individual, Roy began to look for their roots in the basic philosophy which governed the actions of Stalin and other communist leaders.

He found them in communism's utter disregard of and contempt for man. Man, he found, had been reduced to the position of a helpless pawn in the hands of blind economic forces and an insignificant unit in the broad collectivity of a class. He was denied independence as well as sovereignty. That happened also under capitalism and that, according to

Roy, was the basic cause of the crisis that had afflicted the world. Neither capitalism nor communism showed the way out of the crisis.

Roy had seen through long experience in Europe the defects of parliamentary democracy in the political field and of *laissez-faire* in the economic field. The remedies advocated by communism, dictatorship of the proletariat and central planning, were equally defective. Instead of liberating man, they made him a slave of an almighty State run by a party under the dictatorship of the party leader. It was, therefore, necessary to go beyond communism and think of political and economic institutions that would guarantee freedom and progress to man as man and not as a member of a nation or a class. Roy thought of organised democracy and co-operative economy as a solution to the crisis which had gripped the world and was dragging it in the direction of war and destruction.

But it was necessary to give both organised democracy and co-operative economy a philosophical foundation. He gave it to them through his newly-evolved philosophy of radical humanism. He was engaged in evolving it from 1944 onwards. In 1946 he wrote the *Twenty-two Theses* which outlined it in the form of categorical statements. The Radical Democratic Party discussed the theses for many months and eventually adopted them at its conference held in Bombay in December 1946. In 1947 they were elaborated in the form of a manifesto entitled *New Humanism*. In course of time, the manifesto may attain the same rank in revolutionary literature as the *Communist Manifesto* published by Karl Marx in 1848.

Freedom is the basic value in radical humanism. It is the supreme value from which all human values are derived. Roy defined his concept of freedom as follows: "The function of life is to live. The basic incentive of organic becoming is the struggle for survival. It goes on throughout the long process of biological evolution, until in man it becomes the conscious urge for freedom—the supreme human value. The beginning of man's endless struggle for freedom lies in the animal struggle for survival. Everything that man has done, every one of his acts, cultural progress, scientific achievements,

artistic creation—everything has been motivated by that one urge. Man is finite, while the universe is infinite, and his environment, in the last analysis, is the whole universe. Consequently, his struggle for freedom is eternal; he can never conquer the universe. Therefore, the urge for freedom is the only eternal thing in the human world. This urge enables man to acquire knowledge; he conquers his environment by knowing."[1]

Radical humanism as a philosophy of life covers the entire field of human existence from abstract thought to social and political reconstruction. It does not believe in transcendentalism. According to it, man is the creature of nature, he is an integral part of the physical universe. The universe is a law-governed system. "Therefore, man's being, and becoming, his emotions, will, ideas are also predetermined. Therefore, man is essentially rational. The reason in man is an echo of the harmony of the universe."[2] Man is moral because he is rational. Morality grows as rationality develops. It is not necessary, therefore, to go to any external or trancendental authority to trade the growth of man from a primitive human being to a civilised citizen. Man created society in order to be able to wage successfully his struggle for existence. According to Roy, "the social struggle for human progress, the entire process of human evolution is nothing but the continuation of the struggle for existence on a higher level, where that struggle is no longer guided by instinct and natural selection but by intelligence, choice and reasoning."[3]

Radical humanism had taken over, Roy said, "the tradition of the founders of modern civilisation, the tradition of the revolt of man against the tyranny of God and his agents on this earth."[4] It is not strictly new, he pointed out, as it draws inspiration from the thinkers of the renaissance and from the humanist philosophers of the eighteenth century. In those days it was not possible for them to trace the relationship of man to nature. Modern science has removed that difficulty. Humanism can now go to the root and that is why Roy has called his humanism 'Radical Humanism'.

The journey towards radical humanism was not an easy journey. Roy had to discard many ideas that he had accepted as true during the communist phase of his life. The journey

was like an adventure in the field of ideas. There were no signposts and no guides on the way. Many disillusioned communists had turned to religion after leaving communism; many had reverted to liberalism or nationalism. Those ways were open to Roy. But instead of going back, he decided to go forward. He went beyond communism and discovered radical humanism. By himself, Roy might have completed it much earlier; he had acquired the necessary equipment: study of natural and social sciences and philosophy. But he had to carry along with him a large circle of co-workers, friends and admirers. He succeeded in carrying along with him most of them; only a few dropped out. But that required long discussions and patient arguments. Two summer camps at Dehra Dun were devoted to them, apart from innumerable personal letters and many talks at public meetings.

Roy was anxious to retire from politics, settle down in Dehra Dun and devote himself completely to reading and writing. But politics did not leave him. In 1946, the RDP decided to contest elections to the provincial assemblies. Roy had to play a major role in guiding and organising the election campaign. Serious talks and disscussions about transfer of power began in that year. Roy was anxious that power should be transferred to the people and not to political parties claiming to represent them. He did not succeed in persuading the British Government to see his point of view nor did he succeed in building up the necessary organisation of the people. After the attainment of Independence in August 1947 and the dissolution of the RDP in December 1948, time seemed more propitious for turning his back on politics. But even then he could not completely break away from politics. From time to time, political issues cropped up and he had to state his position on them. As a matter of fact, after the dissolution of the party, there were more claims on his time and energy for his guidance on political issues as his advice would be more disinterested and objective. He wrote extensively on national and international problems in his own journal, renamed *Radical Humanist*, and also in English and American journals. His articles won high recognition at home and abroad.

There are two points in his later political thinking which

deserve special mention. One is his insistence on partyless politics. Parties, Roy pointed out, indulge in a scramble for power as nothing can be done, they believe, without capturing power. Capture of power, then, becomes their sole aim and any means are resorted to attain that aim. Roy wrote : "It is known from experience how, in an atmosphere of political backwardness and general ignorance, this system can be abused; how people of questionable character can occupy positions of public trust by virtue of belonging to a particular party. A party gives priority and prominence to people not of intellectual merit nor of moral integrity, but to those who can be of the greatest help for it to capture power. The result is that parties often serve the purpose of promoting the ambition of individuals either thirsting for power for the sake of power, or for material gain."[5]

The discussion then led him to consider the question of concentration of power and how it could be avoided by having a new social order in which political as well as economic power would be decentralised. In conclusion, he wrote :"So long as the purpose of politics is to capture power, we cannot do without parties. But if we do not want to capture power, we can practise politics without parties. In the absence of a party, the practice of delegation of power disappears and also the constitutional sanction for the concentration of power. We can have a harmonious society, which will be a free society without destroying the freedom of the individual; where the freedom, welfare and prosperity of society will be the sum total of the freedom, welfare and prosperity actually enjoyed by the individual men and women constituting that society."[6]

The other is the new way of revolution that Roy has suggested. He discussed it at a study camp held in Dehra Dun in 1946. He called it 'revolution by consent or by persuasion'. Revolution was a necessity, he stated, but it was not possible to bring it about through the old method of armed insurrection owing to the tremendous military power of modern States. It was necessary, therefore, to discover a new way. The new way would be the way of persuasion and it would be effective, he asserted, because a revolution was desired now not merely by workers but also by the people as

a whole. It is this consideration which determined the political practice of radical humanism, the method of building up people's committees in towns and villages as a means for securing relief and asserting rights which were to grow in course of time into organs of decentralised power. The discussions at the camp laid the basis for the development of radical humanism. Roy's contributions to the discussions are collected together in a book *New Orientation* published by the Renaissance Publishers of Calcutta.

Radical humanism brought Roy nearer to Gandhi and his school of thought. There were now many similarities between the two. Both accepted the individual as the central point of all social thought and action. Both stood for decentralisation of political and economic power, and both suggested party-less democracy for purifying politics. There were, of course, some fundamental differences. Roy was a materialist and rationalist; while Gandhi was a spiritualist and relied more on his inner voice'. That did not, however, come in the way of working together for some practical ends. Common work of that type developed in later years between the Radical Humanists and the Sarvodaya followers of Gandhiji.

Roy's own ideas about Gandhiji also underwent a big change in the last couple of years of the latter's life. Roy, the constant critic of Gandhiji, was impressed by his turning away from power on the attainment of Independence and his one-man mission to Bengal to solve the communal problem. He realised that Gandhiji was a big moral force. Roy was shocked by the news of Gandhiji's assassination. It reached him when he was speaking in a meeting in Calcutta. He could not continue his speech and closed the meeting after paying a short tribute. Later he paid Gandhiji a glowing tribute through the columns of *Independent India*, reminding people of the Mahatma's message that the end does not justify the means.

In this period Roy wrote and published a number of books. The most important amongst them is his two-volume book, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*. The first volume was published in February 1953 and the second a year later after his death. It is the quintessence of Roy's thought and provides a theoretical basis for the philiosophy of radical

humanism. The first English edition of Roy's book on China, *Revolution and Counterrevolution* in China, was published in 1946. It was written in 1930 but had remained unpublished for many reasons. It was published with a couple of additional chapters to bring the story up-to-date. *Russian Revolution* was published in 1947. It consisted mainly of articles on Russia written during the war years. Roy wrote during the period his memoirs. They were collected together and published in book form in 1964 under the title *M.N. Roy's Memoirs*. A number of political books were also published during those years.

Heavily absorbed in this literary work and also the work of developing the Radical Humanist movement, Roy needed some rest. He went for rest to Mussoorie in June 1952. Ellen Roy was with him. They used to go out as usual for their morning walk. While returning along a hill track Roy stumbled, fell and rolled down the hill about fifty feet below. He sustained grave injuries and had to be in bed for several weeks. Expert medical treatment and the tender care of his wife enabled him to recover. He was back in Dehra Dun and was thinking of resuming his work. The recovery was checked, however, by an attack of cerebral thrombosis. By the year-end, he recovered and began writing for the *Radical Humanist* and also resumed his correspondence. By May 1953 he felt so well that he began to plan a visit to the United States for medical treatment and for fulfilling many speaking engagements that he had received. But in August there was another attack of cerebral thrombosis. It came as a big shock to colleagues, co-workers and friends alike in India and abroad. His friends in Europe and the USA were eagerly looking forward to his visit. Some of them were his old associates in the communist movement. They were eager to meet him and compare notes about their experiences and reactions to world events. But that was not to be. His illness became more and more serious as days went by. It claimed him in the end on the night of 25 January 1954, a little before the beginning of Republic Day.

Roy's death was mourned by all, by his friends as well as critics in India and in many other countries. Condolence messages poured into 13, Mohini Road. Many meetings were

held and many tributes were paid. In Roy the country had lost an intellectual giant and an earnest fighter for freedom. The quest for freedom which he began early in his life will have to continue now through his books and through the gallant band of dedicated co-workers that he has left behind.

NOTES

Chapter I

1. The information in the chapter is mainly based on *The Restless Brahmin* by Samaren Roy, Allied Publishers, Bombay (1970).
2. *The Restless Brahmin*, p.5.
3. ibid., Foreword.
4. ibid., p. 20.
5. *M.N. Roy: The Man Who Looked Ahead*, A.K. Hindi, p.8.
6. *The Restless Brahmin*, p. 46.
7. *ibid.*, p. 47.
8. *M.N. Roy's Memoirs*, Allied Publishers, New Delhi (1964), p.3.
9. *The Restless Brahmin*, Foreword.
10. *Sedition Committee—1918—Report*, New Age Publishers, Calcutta 12 (1973), p. 66.

Chapter II

1. *Memoirs*, p. 3.
2. *Sedition Committee Report*, p. 121.
3. *ibid.*, p. 122.
4. *Memoirs*, p.4.
5. *ibid.*, p.7
6. *ibid.*, p. 7.
7. *ibid.*, p. 14.

Chapter III

1. *Political Trouble in India, 1907-1917*, James Campbell Ker, Editions Indian, Calcutta (1973), p. 258.
2. *Memoirs*, p. 23.
3. *Communism and Nationalism in India*, John Patrick Haithcox, Princeton University Press, Princeton (1971), p.8.
4. *Memoirs*, p.43.
5. *ibid.*, p.199.
6. *ibid.*, p. 217.
7. *ibid.*, p. 219.

Chapter IV

1. The information is based on the *Memoirs*.
2. For texts of the two theses see *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, vol. 1, edited by G. Adhikari, pp. 178 to 188 and 198 to 205.

3. *My Experiences in China*, M.N. Roy, Renaissance Publishing Co., Bombay (1938), p. 28.
4. *Memoirs*, p. 23.

Chapter V

1. The first part of the chapter is based on the *Memoirs* and the latter mainly on *Communism in India*, Sir Cecil Kaye, Director, Intelligence Bureau, Government of India.

Chapter VI

1. Information in the chapter is based on Roy's *Experiences in China* and *Revolution and Counterrevolution in China* and on *M.N. Roy's Mission to China* by Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin, University of California Press, Berkeley, USA (1963).
2. *Revolution and Counterrevolution in China*, M.N. Roy, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta (1946), p. 517.
3. *My Experiences in China*, pp. 65,66.
4. *ibid.*, pp. 70,72.

Chapter VII

1. *Communism and Nationalism in India, M.N. Roy and Comintern Policy, 1920-1939*, J.P. Haithcox, Princeton University Press (1971), pp. 86, 87.
2. *Our Differences*, M.N. Roy, Saraswati Library, Calcutta (1938), pp. 112, 113.
3. *ibid.*, pp. 130 to 135.
4. Haithcox, pp. 130, 137.
5. *Communism in India*, Overstreet and Windmiller, pp. 140, 141.
6. *Our Differences*, p. 25.
7. *ibid.*, pp. 27 to 29.
8. *ibid.*, pp. 42, 43.

Chapter VIII

1. The chapter is based on the book, *M.N. Roy:The Man Who Looked Ahead*, A.K. Hindi, Modern Publishing House, Ahmedabad (1938) and on information published in Roy's weekly journal *Independent India*.
2. *Communism in India*, Intelligence Bureau Publication, p. 148.
3. *A History of the CPI*, vol. I, *1917-1943*, Government of India, Intelligence Bureau, pp. 69 to 71.

Chapter IX

1. *On Stepping Out of Jail*, booklet published in Bombay.
2. *ibid.*, pp. 4 to 6.
3. *Our Differences*, p. 150.
4. *ibid.*, pp. 146 to 152.
5. *India and War*, M.N. Roy, Radical Democratic Party (1942), Introduction, p.1.
6. *ibid.*, p. 129.

Chapter X

1. *India and War*, p. 134.
2. *ibid.*, Introduction, pp. 30 to 32.
3. *ibid.*, p. 240.
4. *ibid.*, p. 332.
5. *Constitution of India—A Draft*, Introduction.

Chapter XI

1. *New Orientation*, M.N. Roy, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta (1946), p. 23.
2. *Radical Humanism*, M.N. Roy, Eastern Economist Pamphlets, New Delhi, (1952), p. 16.
3. *Science and Philosophy*, M.N. Roy, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta (1947), p. 23.
4. *ibid.*, p.23.
5. *Radical Humanism*, p. 31.
6. *ibid.*, p.44.

CHRONOLOGY

1887 March — Birth
1906 — Joins revolutionary movement
1907 December — Chingripota Railway Station dacoity
1910 April — Netra dacoity
1910 —Arrest in Howrah Conspiracy Case
1911 to 1913 —Travels in India to organise revolutionary groups; paticipation in the conspiracy to overthrow British rule under the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee
1914 August — Outbreak of World War I
1915 February — Garden Reach dacoity
1915 April — Leaves for Batavia
1915 June—Returns to India after arranging for arms
1915 August—Leaves again for Batavia after failure of a ship carrying arms to arrive
1915 — Death of Jatin Mukherjee
1915 August to 1916 June—Goes to Indonesia, Malaya, China and Japan in search of arms
1916 June — Leaves for the USA *en route* to Berlin
1916 June 14 — Lands in San Francisco
1916 June—Visit to Stanford University and change of name to Manavendranath Roy
1916 August—Arrival in New York
1917 June — America joins war
1917 June — Arrest in New York as a member of the Hindu-German conspiracy
1917 July — Flight to Mexico
1918 December — Mexican Socialist Party Conference
1919 Spring — Meeting with Borodin
1919 October— Mexican Socialist Party converts itself into a Communist Party, the first outside Russia
1919 November—Leaves Mexico to attend the second Comintern congress

1919 December—Reaches Berlin
1920 April—Reaches Moscow
1920 May or June—First meeting with Lenin
1920 July-August—Second Comintern congress
1920 August—Mission to Tashkent
1920 October—Establishment of India House and Military School
1920 October 17—Formation of CPI in Tashkent
1921 End—Publication of *India in Transition*, Russian edition; English edition in middle of 1922
1922 May —Publication of *Vanguard*
1924 —Kanpur Communist Conspiracy Case
1927 January to August—Mission to China
1928 April—Flight from Moscow
1928 September—Sixth Comintern congress
1929 March —Meerut Communist Conspiracy Case
1929 December—Expulsion from Comintern
1930 December—Clandestine return to India
1931 March —Attends Karachi session of INC
1931 July —Arrest in Bombay after seven months of underground activity
1931 August to December—Trial in Kanpur
1932 January —Sentence of transportation for twelve years, later reduced in appeal to six years' rigorous imprisonment
1933 January—Hitler's rise to power
1936 November—Release from Dehra Dun jail
1936 December—Attends Faizpur session of INC
1937 April —Begins publication of *Independent India*
1938 June —Formation of League of Radical Congressmen
1939 September—Outbreak of World War II
1940 October—Resigns from INC on the issue of the war
1940 December—Formation of Radical Democratic Party
1944 April—Publication of *People's Plan*
1945 —Publication of *Constitution of India—A Draft*
1948 December—Dissolution of RDP at its fourth conference
1952 July —Accident in Mussoorie leading to prolonged illness
1954 January —Death in Dehra Dun

IMPORTANT BOOKS

1. *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, vols. I and II
2. *Materialism, An Outline of History of Scientific Thought*
3. *New Orientation*
4. *New Humanism*
5. *Beyond Communism*
6. *Revolution and Counterrevolution in China*
7. *My Experiences in China*
8. *Russian Revolution*
9. *Our Differences*
10. *India in Transition*
11. *Future of Indian Politics*
12. *Our Problems*
13. *Letters to Congress Socialist Party*
14. *India and War*
15. *Nationalism, an Antiquated Cult*
16. *National Government or People's Government*
17. *I.N.A. and August Revolution*
18. *Jawaharlal Nehru*
19. *Politics, Power and Parties*
20. *Historical Role of Islam*
21. *From Savagery to Civilisation*
22. *Science and Superstition*
23. *Constitution of India—A Draft*
24. *Letters from Jail*
25. *Memoirs*
26. *Men I Met*

INDEX

Alipore Conspiracy Case 6
Anushilan Samity 4, 5, 7

Bhattacharya, Naren (*See also* Roy, M.N.)
  armed insurrection 1-11
  birth 1
  change of name 18
  contacts with Germans 11-13, 16, 17, 20-22, 28-30
  Dinabandhu 1
  education 1, 2
  efforts in China 16, 17
  as Father Martin 13, 14, 17
  joins revolutionaries 3, 4
  lands in USA 18
  political dacoities 6-10
  second visit to Java 15
  travels in India 9
Borodin, Michael 23-25, 28, 30, 44-50
Bose, Subhas Chandra 70, 74
Brandler, H. 30, 54, 55
Bolsheviks 22, 23, 25, 29

Chakravarty, Hari Kumar 2-5, 13
Chatterji, Bankimchandra 3-4, 19
Chiang Kai-shek 43-49
Chingripota 1, 2, 6, 8
Colonial question thesis 31-33, 38
Communist International 23, 25, 26, 28-35, 37, 50-51
  2nd Congress 31-33
  6th Congress 33, 42, 52-57
Communist Party of India 37, 41, 61, 74-75, 79
Congress Socialist Party 72-80
Cripps Mission 81

Dange, S.A. 40-41
Das, C.R. 5, 39
Decolonisation 53-56
Draft Constitution 83-84

Ellen Gottschalk—Roy 65, 70
Evelyn Trent—Roy 19, 31, 91

Gandhi, M.K. vii, viii, 70, 71, 74, 78, 90
Ghosh, Aurobindo 3, 4, 6
Ghosh, Barin 3, 5, 6

Hindu-German Conspiracy 20
Howrah Conspiracy 8, 9

Independent India 70
India in Transition 38
Indian Federation of Labour 81

Jugantar Party 9

Kanpur Conspiracy Case 37, 41, 42, 59, 63

Lajpat Rai 19-20
League of Radical Congressmen 74, 77-78
Lenin vii, 31-33, 38, 56

Marx, Karl 29, 86
Meerut Conspiracy Case 37, 61, 64
Mukherjee, Jadugopal 3, 10
Mukherjee, Jatindranath 6-8, 11-12, 15, 17
Mexico vii, 20-26
Socialist Party 22-23, 26
Communist Party 29-34
Muhajirs 36-37

Nehru, Jawaharlal vii, 64, 66, 68, 69, 70, 75, 78-79

People's Plan 82
Partition of Bengal 2, 3

'Quit India' Movement vii, 81

Radical Democratic Party 79, 81, 86, 88
Radical Humanism ix-x, 85-92
Roy, M.N. (*See also* Bhattacharya, Naren)
  arrest in Bombay 60, 63
  arrest in New York 20
  assumes name 18
  in Berlin 28-30, 38
  with Borodin 24-25
  communism and Marxism x, 85-86
  decolonisation 53-56
  differences with CPI and CSP 72
  escapes to Mexico 20
  expulsion from CI 54-56
  Faizpur Congress 69
  formation of CPI 37
  get-away from Moscow 53
  Kanpur Case 41
  Karachi Congress 60, 62
  last days 91-92
  literary work in jail 64-66
  manifestos to INC 39-40
  meets E. Trent 19
  meets Lenin 31-32
  in Mexico 18-27
  mission to China 43-50
  in New York 19-20
  open letter to CI 55-56
  partyless politics 88-89
  rebirth in Mexico 26
  revolution by consent 89
  in Tashkent 35-42
  Twenty-two Theses 85
  and War II 76, 82
Roy Group 60-61, 66, 71

Sedition Committee Report 10, 14
Stalin vii, 30, 33, 51-52, 56, 59
Sun Yat-sen 16

Trotsky vii, 31, 43, 51-52
Thalheimar, A. 28, 54
Vanguard 39, 42
Vivekananda, 3-4, 19
World War I 13, 28, 31-32
World War II vii, viii, ix, 74-75

Zinoviev 31, 56

Printed at : D.R.Printers & Convertors Pvt. Ltd., B-30, Sec.-9, Noida (U.P.)

This biography of M.N. Roy, the illustrious founder of the political movement known as 'Radical Humanism' provides a concise picture of Roy's life and times. A great revolutionary and a political activist, Roy had participated in the armed struggle in India against the British Empire during the first two decades of the 20th century and also in the revolutionary activities in Mexico and China. He came in personal contact and worked with revolutionary figures like Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. Though much revered and already part of a myth, his contribution to Indian national movement remains to be adequately assessed and appreciated.

V.B. Karnik (1903–1985) began his political career by joining the non-cooperation movement in 1921 while in college. He came in contact with M.N. Roy when he returned to India in 1930. Thereafter he was closely associated with Roy in all his activities. He was the first General Secretary of the Radical Democratic Party founded by Roy. Among his publications are: *Indian Trade Unions—A Survey, Indian Labour—Problems and Prospects, Strikes in India* and *M.N. Roy—A Political Biography.*

Rs 35.00

ISBN 81-237-2043-2

NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA